TEACHING CONTEMPLATIVE LISTENING IN AN AGE OF SONIC OVERLOAD

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Although the term “spiritual” can mean a variety of things in the academic world, especially if one considers secular forms of the spiritual along with more traditional religious interpretations, I doubt that few scholars would deny that spiritual understanding must entail some mode of contemplative thinking.

Music certainly has a long tradition of being used as an aid to contemplative modes of thinking, but the kind of music usually associated with college youth—popular music forms currently in vogue—are primarily focused on the kinesthetic and sexual nature of youth. Young people have a high energy level which is often expressed in dancing and other activities requiring music “with a beat.” In addition, there is a way that music serves to lubricate the process of meeting other people to whom one has a romantic and physical attraction. These kinds of music: rock and roll, hip hop, techno, etc. are hardly contemplative.

The values of popular music: activity without deep thought; sensory overload (especially if music listening is combined with other activities); adherence to known musical formulas that don’t challenge one to hear or think in an individual way; and a sense that a “general idea” counts as understanding (after all, many young people cannot even understand all of the lyrics to some of the songs to which they regularly listen); are not only not conducive to spirituality but are also barriers to serious intellectual study and critical thought. Encouraging contemplative listening as an art form creates more than spiritual awareness, it also can lead to the kind of thinking which will make a student successful and innovative in the classroom.

As one who teaches sound recording and electronic music composition, the need for students to listen with discernment is especially important. Thus it has been a key mission of my teaching to introduce students to the art of contemplative listening. Although this has been in the context of courses in sound recording techniques and sound composition, I have no illusions that even many, much less most, of these students will make their career as recording engineers, producers or sound composers. But knowing how to listen contemplatively will bring understanding through hearing in a way that goes beyond simple musical enjoyment.

The process of learning contemplative listening in my classes takes three forms. The first is learning to appreciate compositions of sound art which require concentration and reflection, second is listening to individual sounds, recording them and learning to describe their characteristics. In the third stage the process of listening shifts to one of creation as I teach students to use individual sounds to create simple sound compositions. In this way students learn to let the materials of sound guide them to original sound structures and designs, almost the reverse of traditional musical composition in which one tries to compose a piece by filling in notes according to a pre-set structure (whether one of classical, pop, hip-hop or jazz music).

APPRECIATING SOUND ART

The kinds of sound art, which I think are most useful to contemplative listening, can fit into four basic categories:

1. Extreme minimalism
2. Compositions having highly repetitive or sustained forms
3. Lowercase Sound art
4. Soundscape art

Extreme minimalism often produces the same kind of disbelief in the listener that extreme minimalism in the visual arts does to the viewer. Who hasn’t looked at a canvas painted nearly solid black and thought, “what is this painter trying to put over on the public”? Similarly, when students first hear a piece such as “KATO NK 300” by Zoltan Jeney [1] in which the two notes are permuted on the organ over a period of 25 minutes, there is at first a sense that this must be kind of a joke, especially since a computer could be programmed to play the notes on ad infinitum. But this opens up the discussion about how a computer-sequenced performance might sound in comparison to the subtle differences which cannot be eliminated when a human player tries to perform as regularly as a computer. The students come to understand that Jeney’s music is not the notes themselves, but the subtle irregularities produced by trying to play without irregularity. This insight might make a student look differently, also, at the “graph paper” paintings of Agnes Martin, work that is often described as “spiritual” in art history books and in the artists’ own writings. Certainly other composers of extreme minimalism who also generate discussion include LaMonte Young (who works with extremely sustained drones), Phil Niblock (who works with sustained note clusters), and Tony Conrad (who worked with LaMonte young in the early days).

An extension of extreme minimalism is work consisting of lengthy repetition of certain music elements, usually with some small development and/or variation. My own awareness of my love for this kind of music came in college when I first encountered the Saint Matthew Passion of Orlando de Lasso. This work, which filled both sides of the standard LP recording I owned, is really one long single motet. Yet it had a hypnotic and spiritual effect on me which seemed to transcend, for me, the impact of the highly dramatic Saint Matthew Passion of J.S. Bach.

The repetitive piece I like to introduce to students is Gavin Bryar’s “The Sinking of the Titanic.” The basic tune for this work is a repetitive playing, by string quartet, of a well known Anglican hymn tune reputed to have been played by the Titanic’s dance orchestra as the ship was sinking. The work also combines sounds of the ship itself recorded during the much more recent recovery efforts to collect artifacts from the ship, as well as a montage of recorded sounds from other performances of the work. It lasts about one hour. I warn students about the length and about the repetition, but ask them to listen carefully. They are told not to read, write, sleep or do other activities that would distract them from the music. The music is an exercise in “getting lost” within sonic repetition and seeing what effect this has on one’s learning to focus one’s mind. It is really kind of a musically enhanced Quaker meeting with some of the same expected result as Quaker’s expect from their form of worship.

Whenever I get frustrated because students are not paying close attention in class or when I tire of hearing student cars drive by with high powered sub-woofers chugging out a beat at a high decibel level, I remind myself of the delightful mailing list and website, popular with a number of young people, known as “Lowercase Sound.” [2] By its own description (from a limited edition sampler) Lowercase Sound” is this moment of pure attention that one’s sense of self simultaneously disappears and swells to encompass the surroundings. By composing for this type of listening . . . these artists force the listener to pay focused attention to sound. After a couple of times through this set you may discover for yourself that composition are all around you at every moment, the hum of the refrigerator, the refuse truck backing up in the ally, a plastic bag trapped in the fence rustling . . . “the only thing that is not art is inattention” said Marcel Duchamp, and now you are paying attention.”[3]

Many of the composers of Lowercase Sound might better be termed “sound artists” than “composers” in the traditional music sense. Sound accidents, sound that is barely perceptible,
and found sounds are all an important part of this movement of (mostly) young people who like to listen carefully even to the quietest of sounds. Indeed, Fernando Lopez once submitted a CD of his “compositions” for pressing that was recorded at such a low level that the master was returned to him by the pressing company with a letter explaining that something must have gone wrong when he tried to produce his master, that he appeared to have submitted a CD containing no sound!

One of the delights for me of lowercase sound composition is that when one listens at home, often one is not sure which sounds are on the recording and which are sounds filtering in from the outside or are produced inside by various appliances. By learning to listen to lowercase sound, one starts to appreciate the found music all around. I used to always wear a Walkman minidisk player or radio when out striding for exercise. But the more I got into lowercase sound the more I found that I preferred listening to the music provided by the environment around me. Even sounds which used to seem annoying and all the same—cars passing for example—have begun to take on new meanings as I learn to hear each different car sound as an individual sonic mini-composition based on the same grand automotive theme. I was at a meeting last winter during which the steam radiators started making such interesting polyrhythmic sounds I completely tuned out of the discussion for a few minutes just to enjoy and savor the natural music of the room. (How I wished I had been carrying my minidisk recorder.) Later, when I talked to others at the meeting about how interesting the sound had been, I found that most totally “tuned out” the radiators and had no recollection of hearing anything from them, much less anything musically interesting.

A genre of sound art closely related to listening to one’s environment is the Soundscape. Artists working in this medium usually try to document a particular environment by recording sonic elements of the environment. Some further create sound collages—soundscape compositions—by recombining the individual recorded elements in some meaningful way. Some of the most famous of these artists are Claude Shryer, Hildegard Westerkamp, Dan Lander and many others. This form has become especially popular in Canada; thus many of its best know practitioners are Canadian. I once tried to start off a beginning recording class with soundscape composition, but found that it works best to introduce students to the sonic art forms mentioned above first, else they don’t realize that their own sonic environments are rich enough to have anything worth recording. They simply tune out interesting sounds (like the people at the committee meeting). Indeed, rather than support listening with discernment, I sometimes feel like colleges and universities contribute to the problem.

So many people are used to being surrounded by sound these days—whether the sound of heating and mechanical systems that have not been properly soundproofed, the sound of recorded “background” music in a restaurant or office, the sound of a radio and TV on but ignored, or the sounds of others in the room talking or making noise—that people stop thinking about or even noticing sound. Thus noise pollution is largely a non-issue even among people highly concerned with other quality of life issues and many of my students can’t figure out why I find even small sounds distracting while I am trying to lecture. There are organizations, such as the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, which are concerned with these issues, but these organizations do not get much press coverage compared with other environmental groups. Indeed, universities which claim to be at the cutting edge of social issues concerning health and the environment continue to sponsor rock and hip-hop concerts for their students at which the music is played at a sound pressure level known to cause permanent ear damage—levels which would be outlawed in the workplace without hearing protectors being provided. How can we expect our students to be discerning and contemplative listeners if we deafen them at college social functions?

RECORDING AND CREATION
One would imagine that an ability to hear and listen carefully would be a prime pre-requisite for taking of the art of sound recording, yet I find that students planning to enter the field of sound recording often have to be taught to listen to sound. When recording a piece of music, the students tend to get involved in the music rather than in the whole sound and simply to not notice distortions, hum, and other distracting sounds (such a instrument rattles, squeaky chairs, etc.). A similar problem occurs when teaching students photography. They get so involved with their main subject, they forget to see the picture as a frame containing an arrangement of elements but keep their eye focused only on the center portion of their image or on some other part of the image which interests them.

I mentioned above the problem of getting students to notice interesting sounds in their own environment. In order to help students to hear all of the sound around them, I give students a list of qualities (e.g. “smooth,” “gritty,” “edgy” etc.) and ask them to find and record sounds which they feel have those qualities. I emphasize that the qualities must be inherent in the sounds themselves and should not be based simply on the method of producing the sound. Thus a “sharp” sound is not necessarily the sound made by a knife cutting something. Indeed the sound of a knife slicing a tomato, for example, is usually a very soft smooth sound, not one, which would be characterized as “sharp.” Students start with easy terms (“smooth,” “flowing,” “hard,”) and progress to ones which take considerable thought (“sexy,” “schizophrenic,” “grandiose”). Thus listening becomes contemplative and analytical. There may be many ideas about what quality a “frantic” sound might have, but it takes some thought, and some listening, to find a good example.

After each of the students have recorded a variety of differing sounds, and have produced quite extensive sound libraries, students then create sound compositions using these recorded sounds. These are not unlike soundscape compositions except that they don’t necessarily document a place or environment. They are a form of musique concrete composition—in which sounds are tape recorded then processed and edited to create a form of music—except that I do not encourage as much sound processing in early compositions as is usually done by most musique concrete composers.

Although the sound compositions done by these students can be considered a form of music, they are not based on traditional musical forms of either popular or classical music. The use of repetitive loops do give some compositions a little of a techno feel. Indeed, we use loop composition software designed for dance music to create some of these pieces. Yet other compositions take on a totally different feel. Popular music, especially, is based on taking a basic format and simply making slight changes to a formula. Here I want students to let the music evolve from the sonic materials they have recorded, not be constructed to sound like something they listen to on the radio.

For more advanced projects I have students base their sound structures on the forms of a visual work of art. But even the process of semiotic transformation, of finding sound elements and structures to correspond to visual elements and structures, requires greater analytical and creative thinking than “styling” a new pop song using the current trendy formula.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPIRITUAL

After the initial disbelief that anyone listens to minimal music, long repetition, lowercase sound or soundscape art and after students endure the “impossible” tasks of finding sounds that correspond to particular qualities and constructing compositions using those sounds, it is pleasing to me that so many students take great pleasure in listening to the efforts of their classmates.
Each student assumes his/her own work must be the worst submitted, a fear that at first seems substantiated when they hear fresh the work of another student after spending so long with their own material. But soon the students come to realize that the vast majority of sound compositions created have something very interesting about them and each shows a very distinctive personality.

Are these results “spiritual”? If one means religious by that term, then perhaps not. But if one means that by careful listening and careful construction, one has uncovered sonic ideas related to oneself and to one’s environment that seemed hidden before undertaking this course of study, then one has to conclude that these listening and composing exercises have a deeply spiritual end.

None of this assumes that a student gives up any part of his/her youth culture and its own popular music. But my course seems to help students realize that the sound world is much larger than the subset, which is popular music. Judging by the number of students who ask about the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, the Lowercase Sound internet list, and who ask for the label and ID number of musical samples played in class, I would say that minds are being opened to listening as a spiritual experience.

NOTES:
1. All CDs referenced in the paper are included in the discography below.
2. See www.lowercasesound.com
3. Liner notes of “Lowercase Sound” compilation listed below.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY
(This is by no means a detailed discography, but rather a few of my favorite discs in each category that can be used as a starting point in exploring contemplative listening.)

Extreme Minimalism

Alvin Lucier, Bjorn Nilsson, Zoltan Jeney, With a Minimum of Means - Masterworks of Minimalism, SAK 4610-2

Tony Conrad, Early Minimalism (4 CD set) Arsenic 74.9216
Ernstalbrecht Stiebler, Three in One, Hat Art CD 6169

Pieces having repetitive or sustained forms

Elaine Radigue, Trilogie de la Mort, (2 Cd set) XI discs, XI 119
Gavin Bryars, The Sinking of the Titanic, Point music 446-061-2
Philip Glass, Music in Twelve Parts, Virgin Records 91311-2

Lowercase Sound

The best compact example is the Lowercase Sound compilation (2 CD set). This was originally released in a limited edition of only 500 copies (which is probably sold out by now) though a second compilation is due out. See www.lowercasesound.com.
John Duncan, Bernhard Gunter, Home, Unspeakable, Trente Oiseaux TOC 964
Francisco Lopez, Warszawa Restaurant, Trente Oiseaux, TOC 951

Soundscape compositions
Claude Schryer, Autour, empreintes DIGITALes, IMED 9736
Hildegarde Westerkamp, Transformations, empreintes DIGITALes IMED 9631
Dan Lander, Zoo, empreintes DIGITALes IMED-9526-CD

Musique Concrete and other sound compositions from recorded sound

Misc. artists, Electro Clips a la carte, empreintes DIGITALes IMED-9004-CD (a collection of short compositions by many artists)
What gives art a distinct essence of value? Does the essence of art take place when the artist catches sight of an image or idea from within? Has automation and constant sound bites from our audiovisual world changed the artist from within?

Art students provide the best example to this puzzling phenomenon. I currently teach at a school in New York City where students attend from around the world. Each student brings unique creative resources. When these students begin their study in my Mixed Media Sculpture class, they begin to see in a distinctly personal way. I call it the process of “seeing from within”, or “creative seeing”. It emerges from each student in a completely individual way.

The most important emphasis of my educational goal is to “initiate”. I encourage students to trust their “intuitive sense” by introducing a method based on “work in progress.” Success of the “work in progress” method depends on it being implemented for an extended period of time.

The key is to challenge students; to guide each student to make a sincere commitment to study, and to “stick” to one project or idea for an assigned length of time. The process of concentrating on one project rather than several projects provides a solid foundation for the development of the creative mind and provides students with the ability to simultaneously use their intuition, imagination and creativity.

METHODS

Art students typically have an idea in mind when they arrive in class. A popular “work in progress” activity is to combine drawings and making sculptural maquettes. First students draw, using the “intuitive part of the mind”. Next they make sculptural maquettes based on these mind-drawings. This method provides a playground from where the student starts to engage in a dialogue with his/her “intuitive sense”. Through this process, students explore potential inner visual worlds. Now the student is ready to make wax prototypes (maquettes) based on three-dimensional geometric forms. Another affective class activity is to have students explore a variety of different materials used in sculpture, such as found objects, metal, waxes, wood and stone. Students collaborate in group discussions where they share their interests, delve into the molecular structure of different materials and begin to see how these mysterious properties are an attribute of sculpture. I encourage their curiosity to explore the unseen and manifold web of abstract form from within. I believe the unseen energy of materials is similar to the molecules of the wind that are necessary to catch your breath.

Thus the “Work in Progress” process enables students to pursue their individual projects by simultaneously creating original studies of sculptural works based on their drawings and maquettes.

Drawing on my experiences as a practicing artist, I have had the opportunity to carefully observe the process of human intuition in art. This process is compelling...because it significantly depends upon the artist’s inner vision. I believe the “Intuitive Sense” begins in a private world at birth. Intuition is the seedbed where imagination originates. Imagination evolves in a similar pattern to a bee’s honeycomb; incubating and visualizing dreams, and allowing many images and ideas to take place at the same time.
“Work in progress” is the “educational key” to unlock the spiritual process in incubation “within the creative mind” which in turn leads to the critical first steps toward creativity. As Osborn stated: Creativity is activated by “stabs” of “what if?” or “how about? “what else?” “and again what else?”

I would like to demonstrate how creativity evolves as well as how a creative mind can be thwarted. Let us explore three individuals from diverse fields.

Most of you are familiar with the artist and writer Antoine de Saint Exupery. He writes, “I succeeded in making my first drawing, my drawing Number One. I showed this drawing to a group of people and asked them to describe the drawing. They said it is just a hat, what is the big deal about drawing a hat?” Saint Exupery replied, “My drawing was not an image of a hat, it was an image of a boa digesting an elephant.” Then he explains, “But since no one seems to understand my drawing, I made another drawing. I drew the inside of the boa so that everybody could see it clearly. This was my drawing number Two. This time the response of my audience was to lay aside my drawings whether from the inside or from the outside and devote myself to a profession of practical necessity.” That is why, at the age of six, Saint Exupery gave up a promising career as an artist.

The insights by the molecular biologist, Barbara McClintock serve as another example. She once said, “You must have the time to look, the patience to hear what your inner voice and the material has to say to you. You must have the openness to let it come to you.” When involved in scientific research, Barbara McClintock sees with the artist’s eye, she follows her vision and intuition from within.

Several years ago I approached the American composer Arthur Cunningham and asked him to collaborate in a series combining Sound, Sculptures and Installations. He told me that he sees the composer as a visual artist. He gave me the following example. He said: “Put an object on the table and compose a musical composition based on that object. Our world offers enough material to compose music. My intuition transforms the world around me into mind-imagery and metaphors from which the melody for my musical compositions takes rhythmic shape.

“I suggest that the inner web of intuition, imagination and creativity depends upon allowing a specific time frame for each student during which the young mind develops creative maturity,” Megan Boler proposes the term ‘Emotional Selectivity’. She says, “Emotional Selectivity is part of young individuals learning how to choose right actions combined with beliefs and proper reason to develop a habitat character.” Boler emphasizes that habit reaches down to the very human structure within signifying intent and choice. Intent and choice increases sensitivity, responsiveness and creativity.

I see a connection between Boler’s proposed “emotional selectivity” and how the creative mind evolves. For example, having sensitivity to “what if?” or “the intuitive way” is similar to having a radio antenna. However, instead of picking up signifiers of signals and sounds from the air, the “antenna of human intuition” senses creative property in the subconscious. To my mind the “Intuitive Sense” acts like a sensory antenna to define the “Unseen,” the Spiritual in Art.

“Seeing with the intuitive sense” is natural for most artists. My “work in progress” method that I described earlier provides the student with the means to use the still untapped intelligence of intuition. My method enables students to freely combine intuitive awareness and thought.
Since the Renaissance two different schools of Philosophy have existed. The predominant paradigm today, is Descartes’ rationalistic school. The other school, is based on the value of Being and the origin of human Intellect as defined by the German philosopher Heidegger.²

Heidegger seeks fresh phenomena cognizable by the senses and takes a firm hold on the nature of thinking. Heidegger states, “What power throws ‘Dasein’ into existence?” “Dasein” is the German word for “Being.” The English translation is: “What power throws ‘Being’ into existence?”

To return to the beginning of this paper and the question, “What gives art a distinct essence of value?” Does not Heidegger’s question of “Being” bring a fresh insight to the value of art?

Again I quote Heidegger,³ “What is it to be within Being? What suits thought or is appropriate for our global question: what becomes of the earth and the existence of the Human on our planet?” I would like to share with you, my inquiry as an artist. “Being” is the essential fountain of the intuitive senses through which the substance of art takes initial form. It is where the creative mind of the artist shapes art into visual imagery to human consciousness. I’d like to quote another question by Heidegger: “What does it mean to become certain of one’s potentiality of Being?”

Returning again, to the beginning of this presentation, “Does the essence of art take place when the artists catches sight of an image from within?” Here I suggest, that Heidegger’s question, “What throws Being into existence,” provides an anchor of certainty to the artist. It gives encouragement to follow the “Intuitive Sense” through which visual concepts evolve sincere and fresh.

Now let us look into Heidegger’s theory of the duality of Being and Automation. He states: “The survival of the inner flame of Being does not do very well in a complete World of Automation.” Heidegger alerts and warns us that the zeitgeist of our technologies must serve our contemporary societies but must not replace the heartbeat of Being.” In conclusion, “The Intuitive Way” provides power to the “Unseen and the Spiritual in Art”. In times of societal conflicts and global change, the seed of human perseverance in art finds its voice among art students challenging human progress and the subconscious from the artist within.

NOTES

2. Evelyn F. Keller: A Feeling For the Organism, Barbara McClintock, Library Congress 1936 and 1983.
5. Descartes, 1596-1650: French philosopher and mathematician
7. Ibid.
WHAT DOES THE PRESENT OF COGNITIVE-SCIENCE IMPLY ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL AND ART

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In this paper I reach into the cognitive science of spiritual experience, seeking to answer such questions as what from a cognitive perspective is the spiritual. Is the spiritual inherently good? How does art engage the spiritual? Which art esthetic and cognitive mode engages the spiritual, serving the individual and culture more, or less successfully, and why?

My focus encompasses the relation between our species evolution in bio-brain architecture as a marker defining our evolving inherent potential in cognition and within that marker the role of heightened temporal lobe brain activity consistently identified in cognitive science with spiritual experience.

Recent research in the spiritual has deconstructed a long held belief that spiritual automatically means good. Cognitive science has also recently revealed that the spiritual state, the heightened temporal lobe brain activity, that is the biofeedback marker for an experience being spiritual, does not inherently signify, or move one to goodness.

All of my readings in cognitive science have led me, and I will take you through that journey, to conclude that the spiritual state is a gateway, that the cognitive mode that drives one through the gateway in heightened temporal lobe activity will according to its inherent process of reconciliation pull and push one through currents in their psyche, through their history of memory, reconciling them retributively or in grace. Of special importance to this conclusion, is that whether one reconciles retributively, or in grace, each reconciliation is experienced with equal spiritual validation. Now that can be upsetting to a religious person.

It is no less upsetting as we explore the culture of the spiritual in religious history, the cognitive roots of its metaphysics, its ancient cognitive science for spiritual reconciliation, with creator and creation. What my research presented me with is a history of cognition in spirit reflecting our species history of evolving brain architecture, from total dominance in limbicness and retributive reconciliation, to with prefrontal lobe development and our potential for cognition in abstraction and grace, our struggle with limbic retributive cognitive tradition in spiritual culture. I certainly was disturbed to understand the underlying dynamics of this struggle, a struggle that continues into the present of time extending out of our most ancient history in Hominid limbic dominant bio brain architecture and cognition.

The writings of Joseph Cambell, have guided much of my understanding of archaic mythic mind, in his Historical Atlas Of World Mythology, he immerses us in the world culture of limbic Paleologic, speaking to the cognition out of our ancient heritage of less prefrontal lobe myth making mind ceremony and ritual. He begins his history of world mythology, with a quote from the Zohar, followed by quotes from Genesis, the Upanishad and other sacred text putting to word of God events of 60 billion years ago. Cambell moves through all the archeological clues the bone fragments, skulls, artifact, cave sculpture and layers of cave paintings, in a spiraling paleologic in myth and culture from Anthropoids, some 60 million years ago, to Sapiens Sapiens indigenous present.

I do find the intrinsic value Joseph Cambell gives to the limbic dominant culture process, problematic, since he does so outside our species history of evolving brain architecture, outside of our limbic bio-brain systems dominance in brain architecture and cognition of nearly 6 million years. Cambell ignores the deeply entrenched limbic cognition that asserted itself as a
tradition in acculturation in cognition, inhibiting the abstraction in cognition inherent to our species since Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon and our Sapiens Sapiens, evolving and expanding prefrontal lobe bio-brain system.

Like Marshall McLuhan, Joseph Campbell ignores the limbic cultures inhibition of abstract cognitive development, ignoring as well the limbic cultures inherent inspiring of retributive reconciliation. Both Campbell and McLuhan overlooked our responsibility to our potential in cognition inherent to our bio-brain architecture. What I refer to throughout this paper as our destiny in cognition.

Zacharia Sitchin, in his book series, The Earth Chronicles links the spiritual of ancient Sumer to that of the tribes of Israel. For it was in the Sumerian city of Ur, that Abraham was born the son of an Ur priest. The same Abraham who would become known as the father of the tribes of Israel. Sitchin also unravels alchemical spiritual links between metallurgy the tribes of Israel, Sumer and Africa, linking them to important ancient culture centers in Mexico, Honduras, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

Laurance Gardner in Genesis of The Grail Kings and Bloodline of the Holy Grail and the writings of Dr. L. David Moor. Both speak of a history of inter-religious disagreements, warfare, confusion, debates, based on errors in translations and retranslations, edited and re-edited documents, which have come to form much of the sacred literature, debate and reform in religious belief and practice in Christianity. Gardner details the messianic dispute and the usurpation of Davidic heirs, the desposyni of the Lord. The suffragette, Stanton, debates the disempowering of woman before God in The Womens Bible, Dr. L. David Moor speaks of excommunications, reinstatements of excommunication, mass murder of heretics and inquisitional, torture, and burning at the stake, all occurring in limbic, heightened temporal lobe spiritualized, phobic intolerance in belief, in the metaphysics of reconciliation of our contradictions, our errors, our sins, with all that creates, with each other, and all in creation. The movie Stigmata comes to mind.

Art has woven its way through all this history of bio-brain architectural and acculturated limbic dominance in cognition, with its resulting retributive reconciliations, conflict, in the spiritual and revelation, since before the shamanic cultures of altamira and lascaux, since before the stone age cults of the bison, the bear and the snake, since before the dragon and the plumed serpent. Art has woven its way through all the changing notions of reconciliation in spirit, caught in debates and prohibitions, in cultural and religious dogma of art esthetics, of figurative representation and narrative, since the first dream remembered. The history is one of religions ever widening debates about what should comprise the metaphysics beliefs and ritual structures within which the spiritual and its role in reconciliation is to occur and be artistically represented in ones life.

It is a wonder the prefrontal lobe development of our brain architecture once it occurred, ever freed itself from the generations of limbic emotional body felt culture inherent to our brain architecture prior to our pre-frontal lobe development. Surely a monument should be built to commemorate the first woman and man to liberate cognition to objectivity, to make freewill a reality. According to the chronology of history organized by Laurence Gardner, the prime candidates are Eve and Adam, emblematic of all Sapiens Sapiens, as they in turn each ate from the Tree Of Knowledge in 4,004 B.C., or according to the Jewish calendar in 3,760 B.C., some 30,000 years after Cro-Magnon. As for the site of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Knowledge, they have been located in the plains of Mesopotamia, in the territory within which Iraq is located.

The point is that a cognitive science that is free of religious spiritual political and cultural dogma in belief, is intellectually free, is free in will to deconstruct itself in objective research.
The result is metaphysics in science that contrasts with that of institutions in dogma. The metaphysics of science is as it is devoted to abstract cognition, free to respond to, and inspire, objective research. In contrast to institutions in dogma the metaphysics of which in limbic cognition, inspire one in fear love hate, to never accept research, that in any way questions or threatens the belief or faith that maintains in itself the power of the individual and institution.

An important observation effecting one's creative relation in authentic free will to the spiritual and art, is that an intellectually free cognitive science has always permitted one in authentic freewill in authentic research, to pursue their search for a spiritual communion with God The Goddess All That Is, that is life affirming, that is free of all retributive reconciliation, without one being harassed, tortured or condemned as a heretic, to be sent to hell.

It seems to me an impossibility to speak of the spiritual and its relation to art and not speak of religion. I myself am religious. From my religious perspective, I know I am imperfect, that I have always been and will always be imperfect. It is the limitation built into the architecture of my brain and body. What I seek in my spiritual work is to achieve less and less imperfection, and believe that the kind of metaphysics of reconciliation, the esthetic framework within which my pursuit of less imperfection operates is critical to the health of my psyche and soul. I believe that the metaphysics, within which our spiritual process operates, is central to the kinds of reconciliation we imagine, create and experience. My own religious belief exists within an evolving metaphysics that I continually reconstruct out of my never ending research in religion and cognitive science. It is a belief that has at its center a God Goddess All That Is, that is infinitely patient and unconditionally loving. It is an aesthetics of reconciliation in grace that is in keeping with my rejection of all retributive reconciliation, even as I in my imperfection, often find myself imagining, and creating, retributive reconciliations.

Within our long history as human species, and a brain architecture capable of spiritual reconciliations, in goodness or evil, we have been spiritually driven by a limbic metaphysics of retributive reconciliation. Led by shaman and prophets, priests and priestesses, saints and sinners, we have sacrificed all matter of things to placate the spirits, to placate the Gods and Goddesses. We have sacrificed animals, insects, plants, even each other. We have confessed our sins and imperfection and have throughout this history of placation openly stated that (some evil spirit, or darkness, or the Devil possessing us, made us do it). We have in our heights of temporal lobe activity also said an Angle of Light, or Goddess, or God blessed us, instructing us to do what is clear from the perspective of cognitive science is that our bio-brain nature, it’s acculturation, it’s nurturing in a cognition out of love, or hate, tolerance, or intolerance, will either organize our reconciliations within and between our bio-brain system, our psyche and the world, in a temporal lobe system spiritual validation that will according to our acculturation, and it’s resulting esthetics of metaphysics in being, lead us through an acculturation in love, on a spiritual journey that is full of love, and reconciliation in grace, in peace and security, or through an acculturation in, and esthetics of metaphysics in hate, on a spiritual journey full of retributive reconciliations in hate, of threats, and insecurity.

There are a number of dilemmas the artist as object maker needs to resolve, beside the erroneous belief that spiritual means good. There is the notion that by simply illustrating or creating an object to serve a biblical, religious, mystical or altered state, the artist is being spiritual in and through their art. While the truth or rather cognitive facts of it are that the artist engages the spiritual only when they themselves in their process of art making so heighten their temporal lobe activity that they are then via the heightened temporal lobe, limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus, brain system activity, given access to what I can only conceive of as the spiritual gateway. Here I reference I. N. Marshall and Danah Zohar, authors of S Q Connecting With Our Spiritual Intelligence.
It is our heightened temporal lobe activity, that spiritual gateway built into our bio-brain architecture that has since the most limbic Hominid time, with millions of years of an evolving brain architecture, from our ancient first upright walking ancestor to now, that we have had access and spiritual validation granted lifes journey and experience. It marked the dawn of human beings, spiritual awakening, the beginning of human cultures evolving spiritual process.

Through Neanderthal Cro-Magnon time to the present, from Shamanic spiritual ritual dominated by the paleologic retributive limbic cognition, to through our evolving prefrontal lobe system belief in salvation, we evolved to separate limbic good, from limbic evil. Limbic good being directed from a limbic place of goodness and servants of limbic goodness from a limbic paradise, of endless pleasure, prosperity and peace, inhabited only with limbic good, with creatures, Gods, Goddesses and Angels, even demons with absolute limbic retributive power over mortals to reward and punish as guardians of limbic good. While limbic evil directed from a purely limbic retributive evil place and purely limbic evil creatures, from a purely limbic Hell, is served by purely limbic Demons ruled by the most purely limbic retributively powerful of evil monsters, the Devil, who rewards and punishes in service of evil, entering our lives always in the shape of our desire.

Not until the Cro-Magnon time with a further evolved prefrontal brain architecture, did enough brain system potential for abstract cognition, with its inherent potential for intellect in objectivity and inherent potential for spirit in objectivity occur. It was the beginnings of the realizing of the cognitive potential for a less limbic dominated retributive process of spiritualization in reconciliation, and its relation to higher purpose. The spiritual of cognition in higher purpose finally gave our species the potential to include a consciousness of the self and the other in higher purpose. (To do unto others as we would want others to do unto us.)

So why do we with a more evolved 100,000 years ago prefrontal lobe brain system than the 115,000 years ago Cro-Magnon, certainly than the more architecturally limbic 220,000 years ago Neanderthal, 400,000 years ago Archaic Sapiens, 1.8 million years ago Homo Erectus, 2 million years ago H. Habilis, Rudolfensis, and Ergaster, with our present designation of Sapiens Sapiens, with our prefrontal lobe brain architecture six times greater than that of the chimpanzee, and a potential to ground our perception and knowing in intellect free of limbic dominance. Why with our bio-brain, architecturally inherent power in intellect, in inductive and deductive, abstract cognition, to higher moral and ethical purpose, choose at every opportunity, like sugar addicted children, to be emotional body felt limbic dominant with all its inherent retributive fallout.

Initially I thought that with the writing of this paper, I could some how simplify the spiritual process and its relation to art, but instead, the more I attempted to simplify, the more complex it has become. I have become curious about the role of heightened temporal lobe activity in hypnosis and the role of hypnosis in art and the spiritual process. There is enough research now in heightened temporal lobe activity to claim an obvious relationship between, hypnosis, meditation, dreaming and delusional states. Certainly such a relation could explain all of the psyche that can be awakened, and harnessed by art, within heightened temporal lobe activity, as well as explain religious ecstasy and fanaticism.

The hypnosis of culture trance, of acculturation is the only explanation for the notion that the viewer by simply passively viewing, especially within a sanctified environment, an object, illustration, or ritual performance devoted to the spiritual, will in passivity, be transported into the altered state, the temporal lobe intensity of which will match the spiritual content of the object, the illustration, or ritual performance. Passivity and submission are a traditional part of hypnotic procedure as they are a part of meditation and dreaming, in which heightened temporal lobe activity has been confirmed.
There are extreme limbic hypnotic techniques that involve sensory overload; having the person or group being hypnotized, shake and jump in place while hypnotizing instructions are screamed at them. Which we all experience in our acculturation. Which explains the temporal lobe heightening spiritual hypnotic process that is "operative in everything from T.V. commercials to yogic chaotic meditation, to the highly limbic, music, and dance culture of the cognitively limbic dominant intellectually disfranchised folk peasant and under class. It is exactly the limbic hypnotic heightened temporal lobeness of the music and dance of cultures deprived of abstract cognitive development that are popular among the limbic hungry, intellectually enfranchised members of the middle and upper-classes. Such hypnotic techniques explain the fanatical frenzied athletics spectator, temporal lobeing out, screaming, waving their arms and jumping about, at violent wrestling matches, football games, hockey games and boxing matches. I include all sports where physical contact, domination and defeat of an opponent are a major ingredient for victory, whether real or illusory, video games have become a focus of their expression in a virtual reality within which the limbic hypnotic process in sensory overload, spiritually validates limbic retribution as a profoundly entrenched synaptic pattern.

On the more retributive nihilist, annihilist side of entrancement within the fanatical there is a history of mobs of people temporal lobeing out together spiritually validating in lower purpose all kinds of bigotry, the lynch mobs and the rioters, all harnessing their phobia, counter phobia, their fear, and tantrum anger, all on a journey in hell, reconciling in a sadistic, masochistic, life threatening and life negating, spiritual validation, even believing their spiritual validation to be heaven sent. Another piece of the puzzle of the power of heightened temporal lobe activity and therefore the power of the spiritual gateway and its spiritualizing of thought and behavior, is the confirmed relation between spiritual process and psychic phenomena, as in the role of prayer, inner visioning and ritual in all variety of miracles, and casting of spells. Ostrander and Shroeder, in Psychic Discoveries and The Handbook of Psychic Discoveries and Super Learning, shed much light on this piece of the puzzle. Ancient kabalistic spells are detailed in the book by Francis Barrett, titled The Magus. An important source for information on psychic phenomena is The Association of Research and Enlightenment, located in Virginia, known more popularly, as The Edger Cayce Foundation.

The traditional frameworks within which artists have sought to move themselves and the viewer to spiritual evolution is in need of serious review, they are clearly limited by their bias in erroneous obsolete cognitive science, and culturally dictated narrative content and form. With the spiritual as a gateway with no inherent goodness, the artist must distinguish, both the form and content that will serve a spiritually driven goodness from that form and content that will serve a spiritually driven evilness. I believe that this problem is solved by the passive viewer becoming an active participant with the artist, in pursuit of the good, working within the artists, intentional semantic, within an abstract cognitively created script, the esthetics of which is arrived at in the present of cognitive science. The intention, being to move the participant in a harmony of cognition in grace to higher purpose, a harmony wherein that aspect of brain architecture, the prefrontal lobe system, serving development in intellect, having organized a life affirming metaphysics, guides within the framework of that life affirming metaphysics, the temporal lobe limbic imagining system, as it spiritually engages every aspect of the art making, through the spiritual journey.

Many fundamental questions about the spiritual previously unable to even be formulated can now be formulated, asked and answered by cognitive science. Questions such as is the spurious spiritual experience simply an abstract idea of the spiritual? If the abstract idea does not heighten temporal lobe activity, it is not authentically spiritual. If it does, it is. Is the authentically spiritual simply any experienced heightened emotional body feltness? Yes, if the heightened emotional body feltness has heightened temporal lobe activity. If it has not, it is not. How does the artist acquire and apply the cognitive science with which to create artworks that
are more than illustrations or ideas of the spiritual, artworks that are authentically evocative and provocative of the heightened temporal lobe activity, that cognitive science has identified as spiritual process? Hopefully this paper and the sources it references will answer that question, and such questions as the following. How can one in this heightened temporal lobe activity with its limbic hippocampus pool of physiologically rooted, emotional history, a history with much of its focus in abuse and retributive imagining; how can one with such a history be reconciled, be inspired to imagining, intellect and behavior that serves higher purpose, that serves spirit in grace?

Certainly we would succeed as artists in experiencing the spiritual, in higher purpose, in entering the spiritual gateway and impart that ability to participant viewers, if we would stop confusing ourselves, with erroneous, obsolete and retributive, cultural and religious, cognitive models of spiritual process of spiritual form and content. It is a confusion between older and newer cognitive models, between what we in the present of cognitive science understand the relation to be between spiritual content and spiritual meaning and the relation that spiritual process and behavior has to spiritual meaning. It is an esthetic problem common to artistic orthodoxy, to classicism, and modernism, as each rigidly adheres to the cognitive science that inspired its esthetic originally, to become an esthetic dogma, inhibiting an esthetic progress that is in keeping with the constant progress made by cognitive science.

The distinguishing scientifically, the spurious from the authentic spiritual process and experience, is as simple technologically, as the reading of ones brainwave activity through EEG, or more advanced magnetoence phalographic, biofeedback. A reading in the gamma range at 40Hz, is the heightened temporal lobe activity that moves one through the spiritual gateway, and an authentic but not necessarily authenticating, and therefore life affirming spiritual experience. The discovery recently of 200Hz oscillations in the hippocampus is yet to be deciphered, although it clearly speaks of the power of memory as a psychosomatic entity in heightened temporal lobe activity.

As for how one distinguishes through ones artwork, those spiritual validations that are in affirmation of life, from those in negation of life, one must distinguish to what extent one narrative of reconciliation is in life affirming grace, and to what extent ones narrative of reconciliation is life negating retributive. One also retraces ones steps in encoding and deciphers the negation or affirmation of life in all that comprises the form and content of the artwork, and all else that one determines contributes to the completion of the artwork. One also pays special attention throughout the art making to ones experience in emotion and ones heightened temporal lobe activity during, ones passage through the spiritual gateway. Such attention to process is essential to distinguishing ones spirit in higher purpose from ones spirit in lower purpose, a distinction especially important within this discussion of the spiritual in art.

Keep in mind that it is the moral, ethical, life affirming values as they form the foundation of ones spiritual metaphysics, that organize, and guide all that the psyche is in its heightened temporal lobe activity and journey. It is out of such life affirming, intention that ones narrative of reconciliation, ones imaginings, and encoding processes in the art making, are inspired to higher purpose in grace. The focus here is on intention, on the intellectual process that forms it, on the critical role played by the prefrontal lobe cognitive system, in designing intention. There is less confusion surrounding the spiritual and the spiritual in art, when we release ourselves from all the romantic, occult and authoritarian, dogma that surrounds it, when we do the research in cognitive science that distinguishes in the present of cognitive science, what narratives, what metaphysics, what processes of encoding, and cognitive modes, best serves ones alchemy of art making. The artist is then in charge of the alchemy within which they self-express, within what intentions, and meanings, and most importantly, within what kind of spiritual validation the artwork must proceed in, to fulfill the artist’s intention.
Research that has a special bearing on the spiritual in art and culture, is that of the cognitive scientists Dr. Persinger and his associates, who exploring links between transcendent states and epilepsy, began experiments with a transcranial magnetic stimulator, sending powerful magnetic impulses to specific brain areas, of normal healthy volunteers. Dr. Persinger was able with the transcranial magnetic stimulator to replicate without the epilepsy, the experience in rapture of the epileptics, as well as a variety of other kinds of experiences, like UFO, out of body, and past life experiences.

By placing the transcranial magnetic stimulator over the temporal lobes of volunteers, including himself, Dr. Persinger and his associates created a magnetic stimulated, heightened temporal lobe activity, that in process and meaning at 40Hz triggered many of the kinds of psychic spiritual phenomena, and more traditional religious spiritual experience found to have occurred in the lives of saints, prophets, the possessed and the UFO abductee. Persinger, recalls vividly how in his own experimentally heightened temporal lobe activity, he experienced himself in the presence of God.

In the novel Lying Awake, Mark Saltzman follows the case of a nun in fear that the medical treatments to cure her temporal lobe epilepsy will destroy her vivid spiritually charged religious visions, which for her were a gift from, and communion with God.

Further examples of relevant research are the electroencephalograph monitoring of brains by V.S. Ramachandran and his colleagues, who contribute further confirmation of the links between heightened temporal lobe activity, and spiritual experience. The magnetoencephalographic studies by Rodolfo Llinas and his colleagues further confirm the relation between heightened temporal lobe activity and the spiritual state. The encephalographic studies of Wolf Singer and Charles Gray revealed the source of our inherent sense of connecting to a larger order, uncovering the neural synchronous oscillations at 35Hz 45Hz, that binds into a coherent whole the separate complexities of perception, giving each aspect of the perceptual complexity its own unifying frequency. Michael Green made a significant contribution with his work in quantum tunneling, helping to scientifically explain, the quantum coherence that neural end rite resonance is.

One could conclude that the desire for oneness and the harmony experienced in oneness, and the sense of oneness, harmony creates, is all an extension of the synchronicity inherent to neural activity in our brain. The cognitive scientist Terrence Deacon, has helped us understand our responsibility to the miracle of evolution our present brain architecture is, mapping our brain architecture, and the relation of each area of the brain to each other, identifying brain activity relations within which cognition operates to advantage, and disadvantage, in affirmation and negation of the present architecture.

Many scientists have contributed significant research, that leads to the conclusion that the spiritual process is built into the architecture and activity of our brain and that its anatomical center in the brain is the temporal lobe system, driven and organized in heightened temporal lobe system neural activity in a synchronicity of resonance at 40Hz. Cognitive science has made clear that brain architecturally, the temporal lobe system includes all that comprises the emotional body felt memory systems, the Psychosomatic limbic hypothalamus amygdala and hippocampus system.

Experiments have confirmed that even the most esoteric occult, spiritual phenomena, occur in heightened temporal lobe synchronous 40Hz activity, even our most ancient archetypal memories, even past life memories are awakened as we in a heightened temporal lobe state travel the spiritual gateway. We now know that the temporal lobe system propels a powerful, emotional imagining and memory system that can in a heightened state operate in and beyond the bounds of familiar time and space. I could argue that our soul is a file in the cosmos of
energy, referred to in metaphysical circles as the Akasha, and that our pineal and pituitary glands are in heightened temporal lobe activity, our links to the Akasha.

But soul itself aside, cognitive science implies that our soul centers residence is our hypothalamus amygdala and hippocampus memory system, and that it is comprised of all we have stored and forgotten of our infancy and childhood, and according to Persinger including our past life memories.

I imagine this memory system as a hard drive of billions of gigabytes of forgotten and buried, heightened temporal lobe spiritualized experiences, accessible in a non-linear time and space, experiences that inspire reconciliations in higher purpose only to the extent that we have matured in cognition, only to the extent that our limbic system is reconciled in and in service of an abstract cognitively formulated metaphysics of morals and ethics in higher purpose, in an affirmation and love of life. Since it is in our cognitive immaturity with our limbic system in dominance in cognition that the horror movies of our life, the long ago spiritualized memories of mental and physical abuse, of fear, trembling and tantrum anger, that have remained hidden in a complex layering of conditioned reflexes, phobias and counter phobias, translate into the spiritual force that drives us in all this limbic dominant cognitive immaturity, into the depths of retributive lower purpose.

It is possible to finally make cognitive science sense of the endless litany of retributive, vengeful, and destructive acts assigned to God, Gods, Goddesses and other spiritual entities and creatures identified as resident in the spiritual realm, through the history of the various forms religion has taken, since its ancient, archaic beginnings.

We can now make cognitive sense of why blood and sacrifice is central to so much of the spiritual, activity, practice and narrative of ancient religion and why they have continued to be referenced through the narratives that inspire religion to this day.

Not being narrative content specific, the spiritual gateway, is a forked road, an up and down elevator, with both directions equally transmuting, narrative content to spiritual revelation. What is narrative specific, is the direction of the journey. If the content is driven by, or interpreted by retributive emotion, it will in its heightened temporal lobe resonance, to use an earlier Freudian, cognitive model, take us spiritually downward, stirring the Id, or more accurately the limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus system. It is a stirring that makes available the cognition and timeless store of emotional memory from infancy and childhood, the fear, trembling and retributive tantrum anger, awakening and animating the Id in spirit, to spiritually dominate and direct in retribution, all imagining, experience and behavior, as a deeply felt spiritualized truth.

It is with this cognitive science sense of the power and influence of the spiritual process, that the role of a life affirming, prefrontal lobe system cognition, to organize a metaphysics of reconciliationing race, to guide the imagining systems of our heightened temporal lobe activity, in grace and higher purpose, becomes self evident.

Cognitive studies with epileptics in seizure, psychotic, and delusional patients, in their heights of delusion, studies with zen meditators, metaphysicians, philosophers, artists, as well as a diversity of persons in heightened states of various kinds of creative problem solving, have all been grouped together as persons whose experiences triggered and or were triggered by and occurred in 40Hz heightened temporal lobe activity. I add to this list all the extreme sports people, involved in activities like bungy jumping and skydiving, they all share the same heighten temporal lobe activity. Michael Jackson a researcher in schizophrenia has included, functional schizoids. Gordon Claridge includes the schizo type folks. But guess what, there is no
end to the list, everyone on the planet is on the list. Since everyone dreams and dreaming is a heightened temporal lobe and therefore spiritualized activity.

Think of it 4 to 6 times a night we are all shoved through the spiritual gateway with our dreams. And then of course there are our daydreams. Anyone who has suffered nightmares or constantly frighten themselves with their daydreams can see the value of lucid dreaming can see the value of intention in higher purpose in dreaming, whether asleep or awake.

According to the present of cognitive science, we are all equal within the spirit, asleep or awake. All of us, despite the diversity of the narrative content, of our dreams, behaviors, art and states of mind, and cognition within which they operate. It all happens within a bio-brain architecture, common to us all, in a synchronous, 40Hz, heightened temporal lobe resonance that moves us all, through the same spiritual gateway.

What our brain architecture, with its inherent potential for heightened temporal lobe activity reveals about our spiritual gateway, is that it is not in itself serving any specific narrative, set of values, morals or ethics. It does not in itself direct one to, or in itself guarantee an experience in heaven, or hell, good or evil, super sanity or insanity. Whether we are Saint or sinner, rich or poor, a high school dropout, or a Ph.D., we all enter through the same gateway, within brain architecture in common, and a heightened temporal lobe activity in common. Different cognitive modes and degree of immaturity or maturity in cognition makes the difference, they are the context within which the journey through the gateway takes us our individual way up or down, and that individual way, according to our cognitive immaturity or maturity, is radically different.

Once through the gateway, the spiritual journey we have, depends on a number of factors, such as, is the limbic hypothalamus hippocampus amygdala system in cognition, which I associate with the It, in The Book of the It, by Groddeck, what Freud, identified as the Id, free of its compulsion in impulse and its pain and anger’s need for reconciliation in retribution. If the answer is yes and ones Id is also free of its bacchusean sexual desire and than atosean destructive retributive, sadistic and masochistic, imaginings. And further if ones superego, that organization of spiritualized ideals, out of abstract cognitions influence in limbic processes in cognition is an organization of life affirming reconciliations, guiding the Id, releasing it from its pain and anger, in free willing race to higher purpose. If the answer is yes to all the factors listed, the spiritual journey will be heavenly, full of peace, infinite patience serenity and unconditional love.

But if the Id is spiritually rationalized by a righteous superego, serving the Id in its limbic retributiveness the Id then engages in righteousness, its compulsion in impulse and its reconciliation in retribution. It engages in righteousness its bacchusean sexual desire and than atosean destructive retributive, sadistic and masochistic, imaginings, in excess of repression and expression. I reference The Basic Writing of Sigmund Freud translated by A. A. Brill and Freud’s Totem and Taboo translated by James Strachey.

Prompted by spiritualized limbic driven ideals the Id in its need for reconciliation in retribution, will through its anger, phobia and fear dominate the prefrontal lobe system in cognition, employing all intelligence in service of the Id. The spiritualized ideals will then be an organization of life negating retributions, serving the Id in a life-negating authoritarian will to lower purpose. The spiritual journey will then be a tour of hell.

There is enough evidence to conclude that all heightened sensory activity and overload, all experience in emotional extremes whether of love, war, terror, rage, tantrums or piss-in-your-pants-laughter, they will all initiate heightened temporal lobe activity, they will all engage the
temporal limbic, spiritual gateway and its transcendent states in service of higher or lower purpose, in service of good or evil according to ones cognitive maturity or cognitive immaturity.

It is within these understandings of the spiritual that I discuss the culture of entertainment, of entrancement, of the awake dream, of video games and moviemaking, that I critique the production of entertainment in service of the limbic culture, in service of the cognitive and spiritual immaturity that sustain it.

It is the experts on cognitive immaturity who in what has come to be called entertainment harness and further condition reflex our cognitive immaturity, who pull the strings of our infantile obsessions in desire and retribution. They design the scripts, the narratives the characters, limbically orchestrating every aspect of the virtual visual experience, the sounds, music, their frequencies, dissonances and harmonies, even the most subtle of cognitive elements the sequencing of events. They design the limbic rhythm within which the narratives retributive lower purpose unfolds, builds and ends, the lighting, and flow of time, the pacing of dialogue, voice inflection. Nothing is left to chance, even chance itself is designed to serve limbic intention.

The success of the experts is determined by how successfully the entire package of stimulus in each entertainment form, engages our limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus system and maximally awakens, feeds and serves to further condition reflex and spiritualize our cognitive immaturity in desire and retribution. If one observes the evolution of entertainment its technology and narrative content and form, we see an ever intensifying of an engaging of all sensory process, to maintain a constant and maximal, heightened temporal lobe activity.

What makes the experts, expert, is their ability to engage our Id, pool of infantile emotional memory history, in fear, and tantrum anger, in phobia and counterphobia, engaging our inherent need for spiritual validation within retributive reconciliation, simultaneously making it possible for us all, at the cultural retarding expense of us all, to have our cognitively immaturing cake, and eat it too. After all it is only entertainment.

The history of shamanic and religious, retributive extremes in ritual, body mutilation, body piercing, tattooing, fasting, violence, sadism, flagellation, masochism, sexual phobia, misogyny and obsession, is but the limbic answer in extremes in limbic dominant cognitive immaturity. As is the ill advised and dangerous use of drugs, all are limbic retributive strategies in service of transcendent delusional states, spiritually empowering all matter of extreme limbic retributive reconciliation with spirit in lower purpose.

We can similarly explain extremes in art, in form and content, in the use of blood and sacrifice in ritual and ritual as art, an example in film, is Fight Club. I believe that it is this same spiritualized cognitive immaturity with its ancient history of retributive reconciliations that also explains the visionary juxtaposing of heaven and hell, God and the Devil. Each realm and ruler of each realm, in eternal battle for our soul.

As for the spiritualizing role of the virtual psychic phenomena digital world, perhaps the movie Lawn Mower Man sums up the possibilities of the heightened temporal lobe, spiritualized self as digital energy trapped in the spiritually emotionally empowered soul psyche. Trapped in terror and depersonalization, in a retributive reconciliation in Id inspired omnipotence. I include such films as Matrix, The 13th Floor, and Existen. As for Carrie, Fire Starter, Stigmata and other films of retributive reconciliation, employing psychic phenomena. They are all designed to heighten to extremes our temporal lobe activity, spiritualizing to extremes in lower purpose our psychic phenomena experience.
But the most successful spiritually reinforcing of the extremes in reflex conditioning of Limbic retributive reconciliation, is the virtual interactive video games, designed to multi-sensory psycho kinetically indulge us in every mayhem imaginable. The video games are especially successful in limbically spiritually reinforcing and acculturating its players to extremes in limbic retributive reconciliation, because they more directly engage us, as we engage their intention in retributive reconciliation, within a complex of multi-plesory global interactions, that maximizes the heightening of temporal lobe activity, spiritualizing and spiritually validating our most extreme reconciliations in lower purpose. No wonder they are so sought after by the more limbically acculturated cognitively immature children and adults and those intellectually enfranchised, dropouts in retributive escape from the surplus repressive demands of cognitive maturity.

Then there is the limbic inspired, hate and pornography that forever hounds us, on the internet and everywhere else, limbically spiritually validating its retributive lower purpose, luring the cognitively immature to be Neanderthal in spirit. Most of entertainment has become in its spiritualized limbic dominance, with its inherent reconciliations in retribution, that poison pedagogy that the psychologist Alice Miller speaks so often of in her books. I reference For Your Own Good, and The Drama Of The Gifted Child.

Some would argue we have made limbic progress, we no longer rush to the arena to temporal lobe out, watching the lions kill Christians and other enemies of the state, or yell and shout for blood as we watch gladiators fight to the death. But Id dominant cognition, in its limbic cognitive immaturity makes little distinction between the imagined and the real, spiritually validating both with equal intensity. Who in not aware that the TV, movie, and computer screens, have become our arena and that the seats are being made more and more comfortable for our children.

What cognitive science has made clear, is that the big question in art and the spiritual, is not whether one is to be spiritual, or one is to not be spiritual, but rather what spiritual purpose will ones art engage and therefore serve.

We can now ask what spiritually moral or immoral purpose, what spiritually unethical or ethical purpose, what heaven or hell through the spiritual gateway, created by the heightened temporal lobe activity will ones art serve.

It is a question that is posed to the consumers of culture, of art and entertainment as well. Cognitive science continues to reveal the cognition that art is above and below its artifice, that it is in its process of embedded meaning, not only an extension of who we are, but in fact, who we imagine we are, and what we imagine to become. We know that Art is cognition and that as such it is not exempt from the influences of any and all aspect of our brains architecture, from the hardware our brain is. Neither is our brain and therefore we exempt from the influences of the software the informal and formal acculturation, with its various cognitive biases that our brain engages willingly or unwillingly.

We now understand the essential role of our prefrontal development within the spiritual. How acculturation and education especially in our early months and years afterbirth, setting aside in this paper, the preparatory months before pregnancy, to achieve the proper hormonal balances, and fetal education during pregnancy, and their role and influence.

As an art educator I am led by cognitive science to conclude that because our spiritual gateway, our temporal lobe limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus system is emotional body felt cognitive dominant, it is essential that art curriculum and coursework in art be so content structured that the prefrontal lobe cerebellar system, the abstract cognitive and language system play a central role in organizing the temporal lobe systems, imagining structures.
In The Symbolic Species, Terrence W. Deacon outlines the prefrontal lobe system of our brain architecture:

The cerebellar systems of particular interest are the widespread cortical outputs that project back from the prefrontal cortex to every modality of cortex, including the limbic cortex and cortical projections onto the basal ganglia and into the midbrain, particularly to the tectum and dorsal tegmentum. It is what brings the cerebellar system into the loop of higher order control of vocal auditory processes.

My sense of it is that the heightened temporal lobe process is the reflex that serves, according to the cognition it repeatedly spiritualizes, to lock in that cognitive mode, as a spiritually conditioned synaptic pattern.

In What is Emotional Intelligence? Gerald Garfield explains the research of Joseph Le Doux, a neuroscientist, outlining his discovery of the relationship and interaction between the emotional and thinking, brain systems, in brain architecture. Le Doux, like Deacon has corrected earlier brain science, which had little understanding of the role of the prefrontal cortex, believing it was the place where emotion was formed. Le Doux, like Deacon revealed that our prefrontal cortex is the place where our processes of emotion are reasoned and processed. Le Doux confirms the research of other cognitive scientists that our limbic system brain architecture is the origin of our emotional body feltness in cognition.

It is this prefrontal lobe system, critical to language, to symbolic complexity and fluency that has been compromised, left out of its appropriate role as intellectual moral and ethical guide in the loop in cognitive systems outlined above. As a result, this loop in process in cognition and its spiritualizing, is dominated by a myriad of anti intellectual, cultural traditions in limbic spiritualized cognition. Few can escape. We are entrapped long before we can imagine an escape, trapped in what has come to form an acculturating web, that in its psychosomatic, bonding and embedding of spiritualized anti-intellectual meaning, captures our minds and holds us until we voluntarily stay. Locked in a catch 22, our cognition in its loyalty to its identity in disfranchisement of abstract cognition and unable to be objective, in defense of its retributive limbic identity defies any notion or attempt of its achieving cognitive maturity.

It certainly is no secret that the limbic emotional body felt cognition is the bias in cognition of the underclass, not out of abstract cognitive choice, but out of an acculturation that generationally has deprived the underclass of abstract cognitive development. It is a cultural tradition by fiat, out of a generational evolving of limbic cognition, within a generational disfranchisement of abstract cognition.

The intellectually enfranchised dropout on the other hand have empowered their limbic system and its retributiveness with intellect, empowering their subjectivity and ability to ignore the history of social displacement and disfranchisement, their out of a generationally acculturated embedding of biased preference in social status has created. In defense of their right to be preferred, they refuse to make any sense out of cognitive maturity as a developmental goal. They instead make the appropriation of every device of cognitive immaturity, their culture bias of choice, seeking within the socially constructed illusion of preference, with its illusion of security, to without social penalty indulge their limbic hunger, in anti-intellectual emotional body felt expression and experience.

Is it possible that as a culture lives by, bias in preference and other retributive means of enfranchisement, giving spiritual life to disfranchisement, it dies by the power of that ever growing spirit in disfranchisement it created in its achieving enfranchisement.
Since as ones worth instead of grounding itself in ones person-hood, ones social, personal, interpersonal and professional, intelligence and maturity in cognition, grounds itself more and more in the illusion of a preferred status. Authentic development of oneself then gives way more and more to the spurious and simple minded spiritualized illusion of empowerment through the bias of preferred status.

Is it not ironic that the dropouts from enfranchisement embrace the limbic richness of the culture of the cognitively disfranchised underclass, to dropout of, and hold off their place in a world wherein the disfranchised are demanding more and more democracy, education and professional opportunity. All of which the enfranchised dropout perceives as a surplus repressive demand, demanding of them responsibility in abstract cognition, demanding of them authentic objectivity and in turn authentic objective responsibility to all peoples.

Not that most of the intellectually enfranchised dropouts, don’t eventually engage and rejoin the mainstream, more or less successfully. I would preface their success to depend on their skill at the mainstreams, retributive use of abstract cognition.

What is the impact of all this on education, surely there is an impact, is cognitive maturity a concern, it certainly is not a priority of the college student, seeking preparation for a professional practice of some kind, that in the competitive world within which professions are practiced, demands a limbic retributive style of reconciliation that has proven to reward one with greater power and profit.

So why bother with art at all? Is it possible that the college and university students, seeking degrees in fine arts, embracing however hesitantly and minimally, some responsibility in abstract cognition, are doing so because they know it brings with it a maximal of spiritual validation in emotional body feltness. That within the social frame work, within a university or college, bachelors and masters degrees in fine arts, they at least in the process of escape from surplus repression, they escape its demands on intellect in higher purpose. They can exploit the anti-intellectualism of modernism within a respectable, academic framework, and in a symbiotic, limbic service to the marketplace, prepare the means by which we can all upper, middle, and underclass, escape. Remember now the escape is not to cognitive maturity, if it was it would be irritating even boring; according to the extent of our limbic bias in cognition, the escape is to cognitive immaturity, to spiritual validation in limbic anti-intellectualism. For a thorough discussion of surplus repression I reference Civilization and Its Discontent by Sigmund Freud.

If I am sounding like all my years as an artist educator have made me cynical, they have not, realistic yes, cynical no. These are all issues of culture and acculturation, that beyond their immediate effect, have determined in the past and will more critically determine in the future how civil or uncivil, civilization will be. It is within this realism that I reference the critical role and responsibility of art education.

Have we so designed, art education that its purpose is simply to within its anti-intellectualism, serve the anti-intellectualism, the students have been acculturated to, and demand. Has art education simply created the academic context, within which students receive institutional spiritual validation to escape, surplus repression, to escape their responsibility to abstract cognition, to have their limbic cake and eat it too.

Keep in mind, education in the USA is in itself a history designed within a spiritualized retributive metaphysics, and philosophy of religion, class, race and gender. The outcome of which is that different people especially those from different classes have very different histories in intellectual enfranchisement and disfranchisement, as well as very different
histories in the complicity with the disfranchisement. Many have cooperated with the
disfranchisement of intellect, disfranchising themselves, and others of intellectual development,
and then their are others whose class and culture have been generationally enfranchised with
development of intellect, as well as power and wealth, out of this long history of
disfranchisement of others.

Now here is where it gets complicated, since within this process of informal and formal socially
engineered history of enfranchisement, out of the disfranchisement of others. There is the
illusion of enfranchisement that depends entirely on anti-democratic spiritualized redemptive
metaphysics, of religion, gender and race. To disfranchise out of bigotry, is to disfranchise out
of a limbically spiritualized hysteria. Like any phobic response it is rooted in the highly
spiritualized paleologic of limbic retributive lower purpose. It employs just enough of the
prefrontal system to permit limbic logic to construct a limbic, method and meaning to the Id’s
spiritualizing view of the world. It is an Id illusion of enfranchisement within which the
disfranchised disfranchisers, in heightened temporal lobe bias, smother their own
disfranchisement, in their spiritually validated illusion.

This illusion of enfranchisement, profoundly limbic and anti-intellectual, builds on junk
science, or rather builds on a prefrontal lobe system in service of a spiritualized limbic socially
engineered delusion that an individual is privileged over another individual simply by birth, by
religion, by race, and or by gender, or sexual preference.

The down side of this anti-democracy, anti-spirit in higher purpose, anti-functioning of ones
prefrontal lobe system enfranchisement in bio-brain evolution, for the bias asserting society and
individual, is that the bias becomes so spiritually embedded that an individual, a people, even a
nation will generationally disfranchise, themselves, of democracy, spiritual higher purpose and
the dominance of prefrontal lobe system development in cognition. A downside that earlier
cognitive science called sickness unto death.

It is possible to take science and in service of identity in limbic cognition draw the wrong
conclusions. I believe that is what Ardrey did in the 1950’s with his book African Genesis
when he proceeded to define Sapiens Sapiens history of aggression, murder and mayhem as an
inherent and inevitable expression of a species driven by instinct, by what Ardrey defined as
humans, territorial imperative. As if we, Sapiens Sapiens, with our prefrontal lobe bio-brain
system evolution in brain architecture were cognitively no different bio-brain architecturally
than the almost total brain architecturally limbic emotional body felt driven pre-Cro-Magnon,
of our species. Ardrey simply regressed our species in bio-brain evolution a number of stages
back from Neanderthal of over 220,000 thousand years ago, to Archaic Sapiens, back to H.
Erectus, to H. Habilis of 2 million years ago, back past the Austral opithecines to A. Ramidus of
4.5 million years ago, back to the bio-brain architecturally and cognitively totally limbic
hominid of 6 million years ago, with their bio-brain inherent instinct driven cognition and
behavior with a prefrontal lobe development just above that of our nearest relative the
chimpanzee.

Anyone that knows anything about feral children knows that despite all our Sapiens Sapiens
prefrontal lobe bio-brain architecture and inherent potential for abstract cognition, and
language development, we Sapiens Sapiens in acculturation that begins in infancy, or early in
childhood, that is purely limbic, can be reflex conditioned to the most primal limbic cognition
and behavior, and engage it as our total psychosomatic reality.

That we, as Sapiens Sapiens may not fulfill the cognitive destiny of our present evolution in
bio-brain architecture, that we out of an acculturated loyalty to an ancient archaic, cognition,
logic and language structure, inherent to that ancient archaic past of a then less evolved bio-
brain system architecture, is not to be confused with the cognition in abstraction inherent to our Sapiens Sapiens present stage in bio-brain evolution.

There is a lot of junk science around inspired by Id limbic logic designed to rationalize ill gotten enfranchisement. Is it possible then to define what an authentic enfranchisement is. I would advise that it can only occur as one spiritually authenticates in behavior, personal and social, the reality of the potential we have for being human, and asserting our humanism, that is inherent to the prefrontal lobe system development of our bio-brain system in its present state of evolution.

It is the development of our human beingness inherent to our prefrontal lobe system development that education must concern itself with, and art education becomes the focus of. Cognitive science makes clear that it is the preverbal, verbal and post verbal conceptual, esthetic framework, available only to art, that best serves the encoding needs of each cognitive mode in self expression, making art the most multi-cognitive, dynamic means for our prefrontal lobe development and that developments role in guiding the limbicness of our brain architecture development to that cognitive maturity, that is a constant spiritual validation of the maturing of our humanity. It is a maturing of cognition that in its deconstruction of limbic dominance in spirit celebrates our prefrontal lobe evolution, and the miracles of life and diversity, in creation our development in abstract cognition makes possible for us to spiritually comprehend, in higher purpose.

Such an esthetic framework is ever evolving in research, that it serve to develop and maintain an enfranchising, temporal lobe system activity, that is authenticating through every step in its process of spiritual validation. It spiritually authenticates through every detail of its organization of narrative art behavior and encoding, heightening temporal lobe activity, such that it spiritually authenticates ones self and others in higher purpose.

The enfranchisement outlined above permits in its intention the fulfilling in the form and content of ones art, and ones life, the loving of oneself in intelligence, out of cognitive maturity, and out of that loving of oneself, the loving of ones neighbor. It is then that one is in behavior, existentially in grace loving ones creator/creators and creation within that same intelligence out of cognitive maturity.

The challenge for art education of course is how to impart such metaphysics of spiritual validation to the art students of today, who are in a relentless pursuit of a phantom limbic cognitive liberation. I do not imply that these notions of cognitive liberation have been invented by the students, they are simply reflecting their acculturation in, and their experienced, spiritual validation in immature cognition. They of course would argue otherwise, since it is an immaturity in cognition that receives cultural and institutional, validation and affirmation, everyday of their life, in all the media they are exposed to, and in their education in self-expression, as they are taught, cognitively obsolete notions of culture, of self and expression, obsolete notions of information and communications of art and the artist.

The root of the problem is not that we are not spiritual since the spiritual as a process is inherent to our bio-brain architecture. It is the extent of the good or evil will we assert in spirit, out of our spirit and spiritual process being rooted in an acculturation, and education in cognition either in retribution or grace. The root of the problem is therefore in our process of cognition itself and as such culture, and educations failure to impart those abstract cognitive skills with which one can in a spiritually conditioned cognition in abstraction, in freewill in intellect directed research, deconstruct the spiritually conditioned limbic retributive, anti-intellectual, informal and formal, education.
This is not a holier than thou critique of our ever growing culture of limbic anti-intellectual cognition, it is a history in culture dominated by limbic retribution that has been experienced by us all at some point or points in the history of everyone’s lineage. We all arose from, were a part of, an intellectually disfranchised serf peasant folk under class beginning, somewhere on this planet, perhaps many times in the long and ancient root history of our lineage. It is the cultural beginnings of all people at some point in the limbic retributive cultural experience of their lineage. Certainly we all were once in our lineage over the 6 million years within the evolution of our species in bio-brain architecture just about as totally limbic and retributive in cognition and behavior as a hominid can be.

No one has escaped this retributive limbicness that continued with acculturation to the ancient traditions of limbic retributive cognition. The only difference between the peoples of our species throughout our evolution was who exploited our evolution in prefrontal lobe development first and more successfully evolved abstract cognition in service of the limbic retributive tradition in cognition. This is the tradition of success that dominates our species and the world to this day.

So lets accept the fact that we all at some point in our lineage had a share in this half full glass of success, and half empty glass of failure as inventors and major consumers of the limbic retributive dominant world culture.

Modern art is a creation of the intellectually enfranchised in their pursuit, although Freud would say sublimation of the limbic retributive, and has become the esthetic framework through which intellectual culture with the cooperation of education, has found its way to the present as the esthetic source demanding limbic solutions to self-expression. For this reason I join the academy, the college and university, educated, culture creator artists, and the intellectually enfranchised dropouts from abstract cognition in search of limbic liberation, with the intellectually disfranchised under-class. I join them together in a world culture of fine, folk, peasant, and underclass art and culture that is in a symbiotic limbic embrace. It is an embrace the limbic retributive anti-intellectualness of which brings with it the ever-growing culture on this planet that not only inhibits but in spiritual validation, rejects, our Sapiens Sapiens destiny in the evolution of cognition in spirit to maturity.

The underclass is certainly not in abstract cognitive search of limbic liberation, being disfranchised of abstract cognition they have no choice but to be culturally limbic dominant with all its retributive fallout. I group those in search of limbic release and those seeking limbic escape with those whose only acculturation has been limbic together because each within the larger sense of social engineering, has within very different histories in cognitive development, in education, in social economic and political environments, created and fostered cultures that however different the core acculturated cognitive modes that organize their culture process and Narrative content, they each, to the detriment of the future of culture, within their own integrity, seek a more limbic way to enter the spiritual gateway.

There are obvious distinctions within this cross-cultural sharing of limbic spiritual validation that need to be stated. One, clear distinction is that the anti-intellectual culture is most emotional bodyfelt aesthetically evolved, among the historic underclass, cultures, which in many parts of the world are still folk peasant. Another is, that the limbic culture of the historically enfranchised dropouts, is for the most part a hodgepodge, collection of appropriation from various underclass folk peasant, cultures from throughout the world. The hodgepodge includes what have been lumped together under the heading of outsider culture and art, which includes elements of the shamanic, the occult, witchery, magic and the annihilist satanic.
The more disturbing element of the limbic culture, in its pursuit of more extreme limbic release, to in more emotional bodyfelt heightened temporal lobe activity propel the psyche through the spiritual gateway, is the inevitable life threatening recklessness of its strategies, with a hairline dividing and even shifting between the criminal and the hero, with its cult persona being that of the daredevil for good and evil.

Within the distinctions I make among the various limbic cognitive cultures, I discuss here, the most historically global and, culturally influential distinction within the art culture serving the more spiritually bodyfelt limbic liberation of the intellectually enfranchised, is that of the Modern Artists of England, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, between the 1860’s and the 1920’s. The intellectually enfranchised have always had their own culture of symbolic expression of their desire for limbic spiritual liberation and retributive reconciliation, appropriating and intellectually integrating, limbic culture forms from the peasant, folk and underclass into a limbically spirited intellectual invention of culture. The most enduring of these Sublimations are classicism and modernism both of which have collapsed into that cultural tradition of admiration and esthetic dogma we now reference as classical art and modern art. In the 1860’s the intellect of the enfranchised responded to their desire for a high culture with more limbicness then that of classicism. By the early 1900’s they completed their invention of modern art and like classicism it too has collapsed into a tradition and esthetic dogma that dominates the teaching and making of art to this day.

The temporal lobe heightening properties of classical music, especially that of opera, reveal the intellect and abstract cognitive skills, applied by the intellectually enfranchised composers in their integrating of appropriated limbic peasant music and narrative elements, within their intellectually demanding compositions in music language. Many classical musicians looked to the peasant folk, limbic culture, to its limbically rich, enciphered, music and dance, to its myths, and folktales of love lust, jealousy and violent retribution, in their search for a more limbically driven spiritual validation, to serve the appetite of the aristocracy for a more limbically driven sense of self inspirit.

The enticement to conditioning in limbic spiritual reflex comes early, when intellectually enfranchised limbic addicted parents turn on the monitor of their entertainment system, using it to baby sit their children, or when parents take or send their children to the movies. Its an initiation in limbic acculturation from earliest childhood and that is how just about all of us, became limbic addicted. It happened when we were most vulnerable, and most cognitively immature.

From the business perspective of the limbic culture of entertainment it is more profitable that we remain cognitively immature, and they of course will help us all they can to remain so, reinforcing the reconditioning of our Id limbic spiritualizing with each generation. But hey no bad feelings. So what if we remain Cro-Magnon or worse Neanderthal in cognition for another 200,000 years or more, its only business.

As long as we serve the spiritual needs of the limbic Id, as long as we pander to its ancient and archaic limbic needs in spirit, out of an ancient time ago in brain architecture evolution, we will deny our Sapiens Sapiens intellect its destiny in cognition. I say destiny because our cognitive maturity is designed into our more evolved prefrontal lobe brain architecture bio-brain system, a system that has been waiting realization and spiritual validation a long, long time, since Sapiens Sapiens time began, after Neanderthal Cro-Magnon time, some 100,000 years ago.

It is through anecdotes, from our own experience, that we can reference aspects of our spiritual journey in acculturation to our present that we come to understand how from a heightened temporal lobe perspective, all our social and cultural history is an endless array of spiritually validated, gateway journeys. Our lives are evidence that life is an endless array of familial,
personal, social cultural, art and political, reconciliations, that are more or less in higher or lower, purpose, more or less retributive, no matter what our ultimate intention. Since all reconciliation, whether one is more, or less cognitively immature, is according to the extent of cognitive immaturity. Id limbic dominant driven, within all cognition and life.

Both art and life move us all within a framework of some esthetic or other, some politic or other, each driven by some limbicness or other employing more or less abstract cognition, moving us through the spiritual gateway on a journey, spiritualized, accordingly, in more or less affirmation or negation of life.

In our cognitive immaturity even as we seek spirit in higher purpose, the higher purpose is tainted, we are caught in a cognitive conundrum, since in cognitive immaturity higher purpose is processed in spirit, within limbic retributive lower purpose, making higher purpose nihilist inclusive. Reconciliations in grace are then according to the degree of ones cognitive immaturity open to extremes in limbic heightened temporal lobe activity, spiritually validating extremes in retribution in annihilist purpose, with genocide as a possible spiritually validated final out come. The inevitable postscript is Armageddon.

We Sapiens Sapiens have made murder entertainment, we have romanticized natures murdering as serving the food chain of nature, even Gods will. We have affectionately rationalized the hunting and murdering of prey by the most brain architecturally limbic and therefore carnivorous animal as natural, to nature in its cycle of life and death, and very comfortably placed ourselves in the midst of that cycle.

We are told that nature, meaning architecturally limbic nature, organic and inorganic, animal, vegetable and mineral, nature, the nature of hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, blizzards, floods, droughts, and famines, of deadly viruses and bacteria must be treated as a sacred interface with which our nature, erroneously thought of as also inherently architecturally limbic dominant can resonate.

After all look at the way our teeth, tear and chew and the way our digestive system with all its acids behaves, and what about our deadly immune system. We are told that such an interface of the special brain architecture nature we Sapiens Sapiens are, with such a limbic retributive metaphysics of nature, ours and that of all creation, will serve not only to limbically inspire us but more importantly limbically empower us. But to what purpose if not to pretend our prefrontal lobe development had never occurred. To pretend that our abstract cognition with its inherent ability for reconciling our limbic retributive nature in behavior and natures retributive limbic nature in behavior with life affirming, science, moral and ethical inspired reconciliations, in patience and love in all our imagining and behavior. Something by the way that super limbic nature is not in itself architecturally able to do.

Come on folks our 6 times greater prefrontal bio-brain system development than the chimpanzee has a purpose. It places us outside the limbic retributive domain that nature is locked in. We are designed to through prefrontal lobe directed intention, transcend the limbic mind that nature is. We are bio-brain architecturally designed by nature to transcend our limbic nature and natures limbic nature through intention in abstract cognition, through creative design in intellect in art and science. We are designed to transcend all that is by metaphor in process, and laws of Nature, limbic and therefore retributive.

So here we are 6 million years later, the miracle of our salvation there prefrontally before us, reverting still like feral children to our ancient evolutionary ancestral past, so complete is our acculturated loyalty and addiction to our ancient limbic dominant bio-brain architecture past. We surfaced with even more advanced bio-brain hardware, than Cro-Magnon who some 30,000 years ago became extinct, like the last of the Mohicans, and no doubt under the same
retributive circumstance. As Sapiens Sapiens we evolved with a prefrontal lobe system
development and potential to abstract cognition and unbiased empathy. We surfaced with an
unbounded potential to create and process information and technology in affirmation of life,
family and community. But having over the 6 million years evolved in a limbic dominant bio-
brain Machiavellian world culture of murder and genocide, we in our acculturated extremes in
retributive limbicness employed our abstract cognitive skills, in service of our acculturated
extremes in limbicness, evolving genocide to holocaust.

Even our most sacred notions of self, of creator, creation, of life, family and community, all still
struggle with meaning tainted by our limbic retributive heritage. We each of us stand at the
crossroads, each of us an acculturated, more or less Jekyl and Hyde. The thoughts that I send
like smoke signals up from this paper, like a phoenix from the cultural ashes of cognitive and
spiritual immaturity, are not to inspire the cynic. My intention is to make clear, my
championing Art in the present of cognitive science as the process and activity within which
educators have the most pedagogical control in effecting, development and outcome, in the
maturing of cognition in spirit, than within any other cultural behavior.

Hopefully I have created a familiar loop back to the virtual reality that art is and the virtual art
that reality is, and the esthetic framework and cognition in spirit within which they both
interface and operate. I would like to refer back to the distinctions I drew earlier in this paper
of the various and distinct spiritual relation that the intellectually enfranchised and
intellectually disfranchised, cultures have to the limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus
system. I will outline their distinct relation to, and pursuit of limbic release from their separate
and distinct relation to surplus repression. I made comparisons of each distinguishing their
similar yet different relation to the limbic cognition, its logic, and the resulting culture, and art
expression that is special to each. I particularly pointed out as a distinction, the world
influence, of modern art, among the intellectually enfranchised, with its esthetics, designed to
serve as a limbic liberation for all of the bourgeoisie, from the in trenched obsolete cognitive
science of classical culture, with its institutionalized repressive authoritarianism.

That modern art arose as a culture form out of the experiments of the intellectually
enfranchised, responding to the cognitive science of their present, is a distinction which is
absent in the present practice of art. There is little concern in the present practice of art for the
intellectual curiosity, which initiated the departure from classicism, of modern arts originators.
Where intellect does surface in the present practice of art, it is with little if any change in the
cognitive science the original, modern artists employed.

The original modern artist search for limbic liberation, for a spiritual validation free of the
surplus repression, of the culture of classicism, and its obsolete cognitive science, with its focus
on the intelligent coherence of external reality, led them to both, research the behavioral and
perceptual sciences. The limbic magic of exotic objects from the far off colonies caught their
attention and became an extension of the metaphysics of their present, with its focus on the
unconscious and the magic of internal reality and the then understanding of bio-brain process
and behavior as an Id emotion driven incoherent coherence.

Like anthropologists searching for their lost innocence, they searched for their repressed limbic
Id. They found it among the limbic temporal lobe heightening, narrative, form and content of
the culture of the poor uneducated, among the underclass and peasant folk cultures, and the
culture of children. It stood out boldly in the culture of the insane, and the cognitively limbic
dominant, indigenous cultures of the world.

One can argue as to whether or not modern arts first expression among the intellectually
enfranchised was in music, literature, and the performing or visual arts. I would argue within
the notion of liberation from surplus repression, that the development among the intellectually
enfranchised towards modern art, is an intentional devolving in their cognition. A shifting to more and more extremes in limbic dominance of abstract cognition, in esthetics and all that comprises the making of the art.

The beginnings and development of modern art can be deciphered from within the artist's abstract cognitively driven intellect, as the intellect within an esthetic framework responds more and more to the limbic Id. Modern art would then express itself first within language and literature, moving from the (post-verbal), bridging the (abstract verbal), with the (limbic felt verbal visual experiential), moving structurally, to the (abstract verbal) in service to the (limbic felt verbal), to (musical language) and the composing of song, music and sound noise.

This regression in cognition in pursuit of the limbic liberation continued to the nonverbal visual, to the psychosomatic gestural preverbal dance ritual, to manifestations and Dada. Bio-brain wise the movement in regression would be from all abstract mind and nobody, to less abstract mind and therefore some limbic felt mind and therefore somebody, to no abstract mind and all limbic emotional body felt mind and therefore all body. It would be reversed for an understanding of arts evolving in the larger history of art, since arts evolving, however non-linear worldwide, it would coincide with cognitions evolving with or against the various stages since hominids of our evolving brain architecture. Yes modern art is not new it is as ancient and archaic as the archaic cognition that under lays it.

I can not often enough repeat with all due respect, and so with all due respect, I have attempted to point to what I see to be a tragic flaw in all notions of spiritual validation that in their cognitive immaturity, create more cognitive immaturity. However compelled by the limbic, I have been and still am, the common cultural ground shared by the cognitive culture of the intellectually disfranchised, the dropout, and the adherents to modernism is a vision for culture that is certainly, within the context of this paper spiritually authentic, but not spiritually authenticating. In its limbic bias it is unable to serve adaptations demand for prefrontal lobe system development in abstract cognition, to in freewill, in abstract cognition guide our temporal lobe limbic hypothalamus amygdala hippocampus heightened activity to higher purpose. It is unable to guide cognitive development to a spiritually validated mature cognition, within the larger cognitive complexity of nature and culture, within the larger society, and world.

I have been convinced that it is out of the destiny that creation is that Howard Bloom reveals in his book Global Brain: The Evolution of Mass Mind From the Big Bang to the 21st Century, that education fulfill the evolution in cognition, Terrence W. Deacon in his book The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain, that our brains evolved architecture represents. It is destiny that demands our evolution in brain architecture be permitted, to in free will in research organize those processes of cognition inherent to it, within which our spirituality, and soul, like our intellect and humanity are inherent.

Education need simply commit itself to the realization of this destiny and its meaning in higher purpose, in all human expression and development. The point is, it is not other wise possible to fulfill our highest spiritual purpose in destiny, to love God the Goddess all hat is, one self, or ones neighbor, with all ones heart and soul, without ones mind, being in free will, in intellect, without such a mind, heart and soul evolving out of a spiritually validated mature cognition.

Since our prehistory as Archaic Sapiens, since before Neanderthal time of the burying our dead, and after Cro-Magnon time, even to the present of time, cognition of life and death, of natures power in creation and destruction, and their validation in spirit, continue to be organized within a highly limbic emotional body felt retribution of real and imagined sacrifice. It seems that the Gods despite their gift to us of our bio-brain evolution and potential in abstract cognition, insist themselves on remaining archaic limbic, retributive and paleologic.
It is this same paleologic of the then extremes in limbic cognition, of our then beginning times in culture, that in heightened temporal lobe activity spiritually validated within emotional bodyfelt retributive reconciliations in spirit, all the animal totems and invisible spirits communed with in the paleologic of shamanic ritual. It is out of this archaic ritual past of a culture of psychosomatic bonding with the invisible powers of life and death that those in pursuit of limbic liberation in the present pursue.

As for the degree of limbic retributiveness in the structure of ritual itself, male dominance having its culture roots over millions of years from the chimpanzee to Cro-Magnon, set the trend. First limbic bio-brain architecturally, and then despite all our as Sapiens Sapiens, prefrontal lobe development in evolution, through acculturated‘ socially engineered, sheer limbic retributive force, as patriarchal authoritarian temporal lobe heightening spiritually validating tradition. God was deemed a Male. Women were denied the right to own property, to read or write.

Keep in mind that ritual for the male did not extend out of the giving of life, it extended out of profiting in his foraging from a carnivore’s kill, or from their taking of life in the hunt killing their prey, and in limbic anger, often killing each other.

For the male ritual demanded blood, Pain, deprivation, hunger, thirst, near death experience, things that intoxicate, all the strategies that most retributively triggered in emotional bodyfelt limbically heightened temporal lobe activity, the spiritual gateway. I reference Bruno Bethalheims, Symbolic Wounds. It was within such limbic paleologic as observed in Symbolic Wound that the retributive ritual became the source for communion and revelation, became our means out of an ancient heritage of limbic retributive reconciliation with the invisible powers.

It was within the limbic extremes in communions of revelation and retributive reconciliations that the invisible powers in and of creation gave our ancient ancestors a sign, would place a vision or dream in their head, would speak strange tongues to them, even appear to them, as a sometimes familiar and sometimes unfamiliar thing, as a darkness upon the earth, or a powerful frighteningly brilliant light, as a powerful frightening creature or creature personage. It was in the later stages of bio-brain evolution with Sapiens Sapiens prefrontal lobe development and the assertion of abstract cognition over existing acculturating traditions in limbic retributive cognition that the Gods are heard in voices that are both retributive and in grace. Commanding in one revelation that we love one another, while commanding us in another revelation to exterminate a people.

But this is no longer beginning times, and as Steven Mithen puts it, in his book, The Prehistory of the Mind: The Cognitive Origins of Art and Science, it is over 6 million years of evolving brain architecture that now separates the mind of the chimpanzee from that of modern humans.

But it was not until 500 thousand years ago for the difference in cognition to be noticed in artifact. And 100 thousand to 60 thousand years ago for evidence in artifact to reveal a major advance in the developments and functioning of our prefrontal inherent cognition in abstraction.

It is these developments in cognition and culture that have since then, as if taking 5 giant steps forward and 4 back, with the rise and fall of cultures, peoples and civilizations, that has with persistent cycles of cultural resistance evolved a cognitive science, the intellectual processes of which despite the resistance out of acculturated addiction to earlier brain architecture limbic
cognition, has succeeded in minimizing at least for many the dominance of limbic logic in cognition.

Something happened that 60,000 plus years ago that so deconstructed the acculturated influence on cognition, of our earlier limbic dominant brain architecture, initiating developments in the encoding in language, the counting and measuring, out of abstract cognition, that made possible my discussion with you today as I challenge my limbic acculturation with an objective metaphysics of the spiritual.

Something happened that some 60,000 years ago that makes it possible for me today to present a thesis that speak to how our processes of cognition organizes our processes of reconciliation with creation and that which creates, that speaks from an interdisciplinary science, in freewill, a will out of research in objective science.

We are now able to decipher through cognitive biology psychology archeology and anthropology, through the writings of such authors as Zecharia Sitchin, Lewis Binford, Erwin M. Segal, Jared Diamond, Howard Bloom, Steven Mitchin to mention some of my favorites, a cognitive history, that speaks of kinds of cognition distinct to each stage of the evolution of what Howard Bloom calls the planetary mind. The over 3 billion years of pre-hominid to post-hominid processing of information, and brain architecture evolution.

What is clear now is that each stage in hominid and post-hominid evolution speaks a cognitive history revealing the nurture, of the culture and nature of acculturation, either affirming or negating the inherent potential of the evolutionary stage of the bio-brain system and architecture of each of the evolutionary stages. It is within this context that I am contrasting the Neanderthal, to the Cro-Magnon, and the Sapien and Sapien Sapiens stage.

As we understand the spiritual, and the power with which the spiritual imbues and is in turn imbued by the limbic processes, we understand the spiritual power with which the long and persistent history of the limbic behavior and culture, from its most ancient pre-hominid to its hominid, post-hominid, Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon beginnings, has rooted itself in the soul depths of our psyche.

With the development of grouping, the acculturated assertion and dominance of the limbic system over prefrontal brain development made deadly retributiveness, the defining factor in the hierarchy of power within the group, and between groups. It is not difficult to see how gonadally patriarchally, within the deadly retributive limbic basis of power, the spirits, demons, Gods and Goddesses would in limbic projection, be imagined as similarly deadly retributive, supernatural events beliefs and behavior would be confirmed as sacred truth by the intensity with which limbic emotional body feltness, in its heightened temporal lobe activity drove the spiritualizing process, thereby spiritually empowering and validating as prophetic all accompanying experience, its imagining and behavior.

Being spiritual and therefore religious has never been a matter of choice; it is designed into our very bio-brain system architecture. What has always been at issue is what cognitive mode will dominate, what metaphysics, and how retributive will that metaphysics then be, as one in more or less cognitive immaturity asserts ones inherent spirituality and therefore religiousness.

I believe we can now conclude that the most extremely limbic archaic retributive ancient religiousness which tradition as acculturation has more or less brought through time, through some 6 million years, even into the present, is simply a reflection of the religious cognition, its narrative, and behavior out of that most ancient time. Our spiritual process has been held prisoner to a dominance in cognition out of ancient times in our evolution, held prisoner to our
then, less prefrontal lobe system development in bio-brain architecture, held prisoner to our then extremes in limbic system dominant bio-brain architecture development.

Our evolutionary advances in prefrontal lobe bio-brain system architecture within these 6 million years of evolution with the prefrontal inherent potential for dominance of limbic cognition by prefrontal cognition in abstraction, and abstract cognitions inherent potential for non retributive reconciliations in spirit in affirmation of life and higher purpose, was with acculturation in the limbic tradition in cognition simply subverted.

The subversion was simple enough, one was Id limbically demonized, called names, indicted as being in league with the devil, as a witch, an atheist, heretic and nonbeliever, all with often limbic retributive deadly outcome for the indicted. The Salem witch trials, are prototypical. The limbic culture in it’s need for spiritual validation in retribution, needs to subvert cognition in abstraction, since the inherent potential of abstraction in freewill would deconstruct all existing revelation out of our ancient, from hominid through Cro-Magnon, extremes in limbic retributive cognition.

It is this history of the culture of cognition in retribution that has for millions of years to the present held captive our Sapiens Sapiens potential in cognition. I believe we can now conclude that the less archaic retributive religiousness is a processing in cognition out of a less limbically dominated more prefrontal lobe architecturally developed bio-brain system, and that the deconstruction of all retributive cognition and retributive spirituality and therefore religiousness, is the fulfillment of prefrontal lobe system dominance in development and cognition in free will, meaning, free of traditions in cognition still loyal to our ancient limbic dominant bio-brain systems, still loyal to our ancient beginnings in cognition.

Is the unraveling of the alchemical meaning of Yaweh, Jehovah and the Messiah contained here. Is Yaweh, the esoteric metaphysics of the history of extreme dominance in limbic bio-brain development and cognition, and Jehovah the esoteric metaphysics out of the history of prefrontal lobe system development and less dominance of the limbic system bio-brain architecture and cognition. And the Messiah the esoteric metaphysics of the fulfillment of prefrontal lobe system development and dominance in cognition, and the in freewill, deconstruction of all-retributive cognition spirit culture acculturation and retributive religiousness.

It has been over 12 billion years since creation in its purest limbicness evolved the family of particles in need of each other, like the neutron that needs to find a proton to survive, flitting electrons with an electrical charge they needed to share. Atoms were born out of this desire that comprised the information processing system we call the energy system.

Within this beginning in limbicness, within all its extremes in physics all matter of matter conjugated and birthed a self replicating molecule, and then came DNA, primitive cells and all we call ‘life. It all happened within what Howard Bloom refers to, as the connective compulsion designed into creation.

Within this 12 billion years, it was only 3.5 billion years ago that creation evolved from the information processing system, we call Bacteria, to the architecturally limbic dominant bio-brain, information processing system of our Hominid ancestors of some 6 million years ago. Of course there is more to the relationship between evolution and cognition than just evolution in bio-brain system architecture, understanding how absolutely critical architecture is, since it speaks directly to a species potential in spirit in cognition. A species nurturing and acculturation in cognition out of evolutionary stages of less prefrontal development and their validation in spirit as tradition, will more often than not have that tradition in cognition take precedent over the role of architecture within developments in cognition.
And so it is that we, as Sapiens Sapiens, serve acculturated primitivisms in cognition, serve traditions in cognition out of an earlier evolutionary stage of a less bio-brain evolved architecture, rather than serve our potential in cognition out of our later stage more evolved bio-brain architecture.

As if absent of the intellectual will inherent to our fulfillment of our destiny in evolution, we behave as if we were still designed to be driven by the nuclear and molecular, desire that began it all, that in its network of information processing designed the Hominid limbic desire, with its lust greed and tantrum anger that still haunts us.

Like the rebellious child we keep our creation parents waiting for our putting to work their miracle gift of our prefrontal lobe development, and create the metaphysics with which, to reconcile in grace, our millions of years, most ancient fears, pain, and tantrum angers. We instead like cultists continue to pay homage to our 'primal beginnings in cognition, and let the ancient limbic hardware of our hominid beginning guide our Sapiens Sapiens psyche to limbic inspired reconciliations in retributive purpose.

We have instead created spiritualizing conditioning cultural traditions within which to serve the imagined realities, conjured by the limbic Id, in its search for spiritual validation through its dominant primal hormonal gonadal physiologically driven desire in cognition. Among these cultural traditions is our limbic retributively driven entertainment and within entertainment movies have become our virtual world of one million B.C. in cognition. Whether as moviemakers, or movie watchers, whether intellectually enfranchised or disfranchised, like limbic junkie voyeurs, playing eccentric junk science anthropologists, we feed our limbic spiritual starved psyches, by either making or witnessing the movie. Obsessed we seek out the invention, of more and more retributive primal situations cultures and creatures. How many spaceship, outer space, giant insect, monster mass murderer movies, and cognitively challenged, socio and psychopathic role models have you wet your psyches appetite with lately?

Nothing complicated is implied here, we are all in a culture trance, and the trance is spiritually limbic and as such it is inherently spiritually retributive. It does not really matter any longer if one is less, or more intellectually enfranchised, if ones intellectual enfranchisement can only serve in our spiritually limbic retributive dominant culture trance to as it contributes to our wealth and power, create an ever growing population of intellectually disfranchised who in their generational disfranchisement in retribution are left with no choice but to limbically acculturate each other to an even more intense limbic retributive spiritualization. It is within this scenario that the disfranchised find a God who will guide them in retributions beyond all comprehension. The future does not look bright. We live in a reality out of our cognitive immaturity conjured out of our Id limbic virtual reality, conjured in a universe of imagination inspired not by cognitively mature imagining and dreaming, not by a lucid imagining and dreaming. Our reality is instead conjured by an endless barrage of a never ending stream of cognitively challenged information, from all our media, our TV, our movies and all we call entertainment.

As for the monsters our moviemakers have all these years invented for us, with which they have all these years abused our psyches with, well we have become spiritually one with them. We have passed through the spiritual gateway with them, through their temporal lobe heightening, ritualized, drama and trauma, of their monstrous, appearance and behavior, so often that they have joined us, not like the monsters of the Senoi dreamers, to serve us in higher purpose, but like the monsters in the movie, Forbidden Planet, to destroy everything around us and finally us.
We have invited all our millions of years of limbic day and sleep dream retributive entertainment monsters to join our limbic awake dream movie entertainment monsters, to all swim in our hippocampus pool of archetypal memories, to join as members of the pantheon of Id consultants, that daily advise our most retributive reconciliations.

But all the cult romanticization in the world, of cultures locked in their primalness in cognition, whether by anthropologists, moviemakers, movie watchers, by what ever searcher for limbic liberation, it is not going to change the fact that a culture dominated by a cognition, spiritualized in limbic emotional body feltness, has no possible cognitive way, in freewill, of reconciling in grace, the history of its psyche in pain, terror, and tantrum anger.

If a culture is formed, is organized within an alchemy of bias, that deprives its processes of cognition in its development, access in freewill in research to our especially important, prefrontal lobe system development in evolution, within cognitions forming, that culture will behave as if that prefrontal evolution in brain architecture had never taken place. The resulting cognition, with its will locked in limbic authoritarianism, will inhibit, if not prohibit the evolving of prefrontal lobe system abstract cognition, in freewill. The outcome is a spiritual crisis driven by an abstract cognition in total subservience to the Id limbic system, prohibiting any spiritual journey that will serve cognitive evolution, prohibiting only spiritual journeys that prohibit our soul evolving in higher purpose.
CONERNING THE ART OF SPIRITUALITY: FORAYS INTO AND OUT FROM THE FOREST OF THE SOUL

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Wilderness is a state and a place where aloneness reigns, where familiar and community ties have been severed, where easy footholds have crumbled, where seemingly safe harbors have been storm-tossed or invaded, and where carefully tended emotions have erupted. It is primordial, mythic, and biblical. It is an ever-changing, ever-self-redefining territory cracked open to soul.

As perilous as this territory may appear, it is an essential stop on a journey, which a number of contemporary writers and artists have explored. After Robert Wuthnow, author of the most recent text of the same name, let’s call it “creative spirituality.” This field, Pastor Eugene Peterson writes, ia “a place of beauty. There are things to be seen, heard, and experienced in this wilderness that can be see, heard, and experienced nowhere else...we’re plunged, if we let ourselves be, into an awareness of the great mystery of God and the extraordinary preciousness of life” (Leap over a Wall 74).

In his seminal book Care of the Soul, psychologist Thomas Moore advises us that soul territories need to be entered, traversed, and lived to the extent that we identify ourselves with them. In order to emerge cleansed and healed, we need to cover ourselves in their dusky soil and steep ourselves in their murky waters. Making art along the soul journey is a way of journaling, travel logging, and mapping it. In her seminal book Overlay, feminist art critic Lucy Lippard recapitulates the personal and mythic dimensions of this quest. “Implicit in the work…is the notion of the journey—sacred or profane. The restless artist’s preoccupation with travel, navigation, and mapping is often an attempt to address and reconcile the mythic relationship between the daily round and the road to spiritual achievement” (121). Landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn finds a mythic and literary dimension akin to soul in the very experience of landscape. “Worship, memory, play, movement…are pervasive landscape genres. To be fully felt and known landscape literature must be experienced in situ; words, drawings, paintings, or photographs cannot replace the experience of the place itself, though they may enhance and intensify it” (Language of Landscape 21).

I have traversed both a circumstantial (Peterson 74) and a geographical wilderness. Circumstantially, my wilderness erupted in 1997-99, a two-year period of intense volunteerism, followed by professionalism in the fields of youth ministry, lay leadership, and Christian education. Art education and art making were key to these ministries, but all ended abruptly or disasterously in the murky waters and swamplands of interpersonal dynamics. My circumstantial wilderness re-erupted very recently in my abrupt realization that the “career” I had thought to be cultivating as a teacher of art history would not bear the institutional fruit I had been led to expect. To continue the analogy, the label on the seed pack read “success as defined by the art world” and what came up appeared initially to be a total bust—a weed or mold that persisted, but didn’t fit that definition. Geographically and concurrently, wilderness was made manifest in the lush, green vistas I overlooked in Kauai, Hawaii, in the colorful flowers, shrubs and herbs I watched and tended in Rocky River, Ohio, in the ripened clusters of harvest trees and water plants I photographed at the Katherine Albertson garden in Boise, Idaho, in the arid, broken glass-littered slopes of Boise’s Table Rock, in the early-spring mossy karst topographies of Mammoth Cave, and in the seeds, seed pods, bark, pebbles, shells, beans, nuts, photographs and other “fruits” I have gathered and subsequently “assemblaged” from all of these places.
As I have found through my own experience, revivified in the writings and experiences of others, wilderness is a state of being and a state of becoming, different for each person who undertakes to explore, understand and recreate it. “The common element,” sociologist Robert Wuthnow writes “is that something powerful emerges—an experience or insight that defies ready interpretation” (40). For me, something incredibly powerful has emerged. I am redefining myself as an artist, and concurrently redefining success as making a personal impact and lasting interpersonal connections through my passion as a teacher. In this talk I would like to focus on my art, but as it is inseparable from my work as a teacher, I will return to that work in my concluding remarks.

Since 1999, I have been making shrines, altars to nature, and landscapes. The latter are drawings—landscapes impressions—although they tend to be multimedia in execution (pastel, pencil, watercolor and acrylic). The former, by far the majority, is assemblages. They are real objects, recapturing and reinventing real soulful experiences and, in the process, making something both personal and archetypal that I do not hesitate to call sacred.

The assemblages—shrines and nature altarpieces of diminutive size—enshrine and vivify a thought, a meditation, or a plethora of meditations. They also unearth and partially unpack a time and space capsule of personal crisis. These reflective processes are reinforced through the image-saturated books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Psalms, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Wisdom of Solomon), which I first explored in my Christian education positions and now re-open, enriching the bittersweet memories with new associations. They are also reinforced through my ongoing studies of spirituality—in my Christian, Protestant tradition, in the Ignatian/Jesuit exercise tradition, in Catholic images and “Mary Gardens,” in archaic and goddess-saturated cultures and, most importantly, in western art history. My scholarly “label” is modern and contemporary art historian, yet I am powerfully drawn to ancient and medieval art and architecture: to the throne and cult rooms of Minoan palaces, to the Minoan snake goddess, to Byzantine icons of the intercessory Virgin, to Romanesque cave-like pilgrimage churches with their converging forests of radiating chapels, to Gothic Chartres with its labyrinth concealing an ancient spring, to medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and paintings alluding to paradise gardens and Mary shrines, to landscape and devotion, to the sensual overlay of Christian iconicity over pagan mobility.

The landscapes are “spiritual topographies.” Like the assemblages, they are meditations and memory capsules. They restructure memories of what I experienced and felt when I visited a certain place, centering those experiences either conceptually or photographically in a landscape form. By re-presenting and re-centering this form, whether it be a tree, a cave, a grotto, a garden, a mountain or mountain range, or a linear riverscape, I release latent energies and, at least temporarily, taste the peace and exhilaration of what Richard J. Foster calls the interplay of the contemplative and incarnational traditions: “Divine love (which is at the heart of the contemplative life)...given visible expression (which is at the heart of the incarnational life)” (Streams of Living Water 40). When these contemplative/incarnational experiences touch upon an archetypal form, such as the cave, tree, sacred well, or paradise garden, I find myself truly transported. An artist quoted by Robert Wuthnow hits it exactly: “I see the energy of God as being a part of my energy, the life force” (127).

Thomas Moore and others aver that what I have just described, the process of creation and recreation, is key to soul work. The experiences of a crucial time thus retain their freshness; the artist traveler, in recreating them, maintains her susceptibility, vulnerability and malleability. She becomes part of the matrix of life forces.

Before looking at the concept of matrix, also key to soul work, I would like to talk briefly about sanctuary and femininity as all of my work either adduces or alludes to these interconnected “vessels.”
Making art along the soul journey transforms a place into a sanctuary that one can periodically return to for solace, calming down, rejuvenation, and incredible infusions of energy. This “journal-keeping,” Thomas Moore writes, makes “a home for certain images that have been transforming.” Living artfully, crafting everyday life “arrests attention, an important service to the soul” (65, 286). According to Eugene Peterson, “We need sanctuaries to run to in order to sustain ourselves with what is necessary to live—God and God’s provisions for living in a dangerous world that’s hostile to faith. Holy places are necessary for holy living” (65). It’s crucial to the “journey home,” Robert Wuthnow reiterates, that the artists “construct… a space in which their understanding of themselves takes on visible expression, almost like a sacrament” (85).

The artful soul enshrines her journey, creating a home for images that have been transformed and transforming. Attended and tended by nature, as well as the spirit and spirits she has encountered and visualized in her art, this space or sequence of spaces becomes her personal sanctuary. However, her sanctuary is both physical and metaphorical—a physical space for work, prayer, meditation, just being, and further art making; and a metaphorical springboard for community re-entry, exploration, leadership and, again, retreat. Its door is always ajar for those times when critical functioning breaks down, and the soul re-beckons. As one of Wuthnow’s interviewed artists comments, “Things get bad. Things get better. You learn and just when you think you’ve got it figured out, something slaps you in the face. You’re starting from scratch again” (32).

The difference between sanctuary and wilderness is that the latter is unformed, difficult, and barely manageable, while the former is formed, accessible and crafted for tending and manageability. The latter is the storm; the former is the shelter that the artful soul makes to weather the storm. The latter has a trodden, but rough path (the one we hack out); the former has smooth passages, markers, and shrines (the ones we make, then retrace). The latter goes out into the void; the former maps it, grounds it, and names it as place. The latter tracks a rite of passage; the former maps a rite of pilgrimage.

At this point it must be obvious that I work from a position that is feminine—not only feminine, but domestic. Lesley A. Northup says that “worshipping women allow for the sacredness of mundane spaces” (60). My source, however, is my twenty-one-year practice of marriage, mothering, and keeping house. (Just acknowledging that as feminist was a huge step forward!) For me, sanctuary exists in the “chancels” that I carefully maintain: the kitchen, living room, dining room meditation corner, basement and porch studios, porch meditation corner, bedroom/study, and library. Significantly, I have erected small “altars” in most of these spaces using small tables as altar tables, photographs as reliquaries, framed paintings and drawings as altarpieces, and houseplants as altar screens. The plants are also “house deities” which I tend and serve in my daily ritual of watering and picking out dead leaves and in my weekly ritual of fertilizing. (Fortunately there are no mossy caves or sacred springs in the basement!)

When I began to think about making shrines, I turned to materials I had readily at hand. These included stones, pebbles and polished minerals, both found and purchased; baskets and tubs of shells, left over from a generous vacation Bible school donation; miscellaneous “art craft” supplies—potpourri mixes, dried flowers, prepared dried branches, tiles, beads, and ribbons; the “supplies” in my pantry—dried lasagna noodles, soup and coffee beans, nuts in their shells, whole nutmeg and cinnamon sticks, sand-colored powdered ginger, white-powdered Cream of Tartar, crystalline white Margarita salt, red Hawaiian salt; and, finally, the supplies in my and my daughter’s jewelry drawers—unworn, discarded, forgotten, and even special earrings, bracelets and rings. (These were always used with permission, as were the marbles in my son’s room.) I found myself re-making my domestic environment as an offering and intercession.
In her 1977 essay “Making Something from Nothing (Toward a Definition of Women’s “Hobby Art”), Lucy Lippard made a pioneering and strong case for “creation outside traditional limits”—creation that goes not for universal truths, but for kernels or details of vernacular experience. “All over the world,” she affirmed, “women privileged and/or desperate and/or daring enough to consider creation outside traditional limits are finding an outlet for these drives in an art...that there is some excuse for making, an art that costs little or nothing and performs an ostensibly useful function in the bargain—the art of making something out of nothing” (102).

More recently, Stephen Nachmanovich has reminded us that “there is a French word, bricolage, which means making do with the material at hand: a bricoleur is a kind of jack-of-all trades or handyman who can fix anything. The bricoleur is an artist of limits...we take whatever happened that day, bits and pieces of material and events, and transform them into the deep symbolism of our own personal mythology (Free Play 86).

Currently, art historian Griselda Pollock, citing artist and psychologist Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, re-centers Nachmanovich’s bricolage in Lippard’s feminine domain, replacing both writers’ assumptions of haphazardness and implicit marginality with the more provocative notion of “matrixial borderspace.” Making art in the matrix, Pollock explains, is working outside of the limits and making do. But it is also registering “sensations of co-emergence and partnership in difference.” The matrix is “The process of change in borderlines and thresholds...if it has a center, [the metamorphic consciousness] constantly slides to the borderline, to the margins...Through this process the limits, borderlines and thresholds conceived are continually transgressed or dissolved, thus allowing the creation of new ones” (Differencing the Canon 212).

Having entitled and shown my 2000-01 assemblages as “bri-collages,” for the past few months I have been exploring what it is to live in and create “matrixialities.” The four pieces that form the Mammoth Cave series, completed in late May (during the time I had previously set aside for an eight-day retreat), have been extremely instrumental in this exploration. I re-envisioned karst topography—an unstable limestone-capped terrain undermined by sinkholes and sinkhole proclivities—as a woolly matrix with multiple layers overlying, yet revealing pockets of dangerous and mystical voids. This “spiritual topography” became for me both a boarder space and a threshold, a matrix to be continually built up and dissolved, just as sinkholes evidence the processes of natural growth and underground water dissolving limestone.

The sanctuaries I am currently making continue these explorations. They are marks on a map; archaeological remnants; places in flux; places suggesting, yet never fixed on actual cult spaces or landscape; domestic worlds; matrices. Embodied within them is wilderness, which forms a second matrix beneath and emerges periodically and abruptly as soul, the “sinkholes” of life. The sanctuary provides a place of sanctity and sanity. It also provides time and space to think about how the “real” world might be re-sensitized, and to consider how as a teacher and artist I, in conclusion, might contribute to this process.

In my classes, students make their own journeys through art history; students mark and map the paths of their journeys through papers, projects and prose; and students communicate on even higher levels through learning the explorations, struggles, discoveries of others—the artists they study and their fellow travelers in the class. Somewhere in that mix, and somewhere within me, is “the vessel or conduit through which transpersonal force flows” (Free Play 32-33).

NOTE
1. See Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, “Sacred Places,”
   www.arthistory.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/landscapeforms.html

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